

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN MICHAEL K. POWELL**

Re: Petition for Forbearance of the Verizon Telephone Companies Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 160(c), SBC Communications Inc.'s Petition for Forbearance Under 47 U.S.C. § 160(c), Qwest Communications International Inc. Petition for Forbearance Under 47 U.S.C. § 160(c), BellSouth Telecommunications, Inc. Petition for Forbearance Under 47 U.S.C. § 160(c), WC Docket Nos. 01-338, 03-235, 03-260, 04-48

In my separate statement to the *Triennial Review Order* and in countless other statements during my seven years at the Commission, I have emphasized that “[b]roadband deployment is the most central communications policy objective of our day.” Today, we take another important step forward to realize this objective.

By removing 271 unbundling obligations for fiber-based technologies - and not copper based technologies such as line sharing - today’s decision holds great promise for consumers, the telecommunications sector and the American economy. The item eliminates barriers to companies that provide customers with an assortment of new services and applications including interactive educational content, improved telecommuting, life saving telemedicine applications, real-time two-way sign language conversations with people with disabilities, and enhanced video-on-demand services in competition with cable operators.

This Commission has a comprehensive approach to bringing faster broadband connections to consumers. Many have complained that the United States ranks 11th in the world. Today’s action represents an effort to close that gap. The networks we are considering in this item offer speeds of up to 100 Mbs and exist largely where no provider has undertaken the expense and risk of pulling fiber all the way to a home. And companies are responding to the Commission’s efforts to create a stable regulatory environment for new investment. For example, just this week Verizon announced its plans to double its fiber-to-the-premises (FTTP) deployment rate next year, bringing FTTP to 2 million additional locations. This represents a 566 percent increase over the number of existing FTTP subscribers. SBC has committed to serve 300,000 households with a FTTH network while BellSouth has deployed a deep fiber network to approximately 1 million homes. Other carriers are taking similar actions. And there are important ancillary benefits to this activity. It is estimated that Verizon’s efforts will generate between 3,000 and 5,000 new jobs. These are positive developments for consumers and our nation’s economy. All of these facts demonstrate that the Commission has a clear plan that has generated clear results.

My mission is to continue to stimulate investment in next generation architectures, apply a light hand and let entrepreneurs bring the future to the people. This item demonstrates that we are one step further along.