

**SEPARATE STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: *Joint Application by SBC Communications Inc., Illinois Bell Telephone Company, Indiana Bell Telephone Company Incorporated, the Ohio Bell Telephone Company, Wisconsin Bell, Inc., and Southwestern Bell Communications Services, Inc. for Authorization to Provide In-Region, InterLATA Services in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin*

With today's grant of its application to provide long-distance service in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin, SBC has received long-distance authorization for all its States. I commend the company for this achievement. I also commend the Illinois Commerce Commission, Indiana Regulatory Utility Commission, Ohio Public Utilities Commission and Wisconsin Public Service Commission. Without the hard work of these four State Commissions to ensure that their markets are open to local competition, SBC would not be able to cross this threshold in the Section 271 process.

The real challenge lies ahead. The intense efforts leading up to today's decision are merely a prologue to our actions to ensure continued compliance. We will fail our statutory charge and render today's milestone meaningless unless we put in place a rigorous and sustained monitoring and enforcement process following the grant of long-distance authority. Through such a process, we can ensure that consumers can continue to reap the benefits of competition envisioned by Congress in the 1996 Act—greater choice, lower prices and better services. I look forward to working cooperatively with our counterparts in the States to ensure that this happens.