

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Petition of NTCA—The Rural Broadband Association and the United States Telecom Association for Forbearance Pursuant to 47 U.S.C. § 160(c) from Application of Contribution Obligations on Broadband Internet Access Transmission Services*, WC Docket No. 17-206.

Plymouth County, Iowa has three times the number of gravel roads as paved ones. They pass farms and ranches where the right now the green shoots of this year's grain crops are just starting to push through. A few miles down one of those gravel roads, next to a small family farm where there is no other structure in sight, I spent time with a small broadband provider last week as they were hard at work bringing fiber to the community. They were using a directional drill to bore underneath a creek that ran along the road. While it only took about 30 minutes to cover the 60 feet or so, the total cost of trenching fiber along just one mile of these roads can run as high as \$30,000. That's a significant expense considering that there's often just one residence per mile.

The experience gave me a new appreciation for the hard, often gritty work that goes into bringing more broadband to more Americans. And it served as a reminder of the work we need to do at the Commission to eliminate the unnecessary regulatory burdens that make these deployments only more difficult for providers and more expensive for consumers.

Today's Order is another good step in that direction. By reducing the contributions obligation that raised costs for just one set of rural broadband providers, we are allowing them to compete on a more level playing field, while also decreasing the costs that rural consumers pay for broadband. In fact, this reform is expected to cut around \$5 to \$10 off of a family's monthly bill for broadband. That might not sound like a lot by D.C. standards, but it can make the difference between a family being able to afford broadband or getting left on the wrong side of the digital divide.

So I want to thank the staff of the Wireline Competition Bureau for your work on this item. I am pleased to support it.