

In the Matter of Federal State Joint Board on Universal Service, CC Docket No. 96-45

- **Section 706(a) of Communications Act of 1934, as amended (Act), requires the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to encourage the deployment of advanced telecommunications capability to all Americans on a reasonable and timely basis.**
- **Section 254(b)(2) of the Act further establishes that the FCC and Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service (Joint Board) shall base policies on the preservation and advancement of universal service on the principle that all Americans should have access to advanced telecommunications and information services in all regions of the Nation.**
- **Section 254(b)(3) of the Act establishes that the FCC and Joint Board shall further base policies on the preservation and advancement of universal service on the principle that all Americans, including consumers living in rural, insular and high-cost areas, should have access to advanced telecommunications and information services at rates that are reasonably comparable to the rates charged for similar services in urban areas.**
- **On March 26, 2004, the President of the United States announced that affordable high-speed Internet access should be available to all Americans by 2007.**
- **The rapid and ubiquitous deployment of broadband is essential to the economic well being of rural communities and to the health and safety of the citizens living in rural communities.**
- **The FCC should begin a new proceeding to consider whether broadband facilities should be supported and included in the definition of universal service.**
- **The FCC should redefine the definition of universal service to include support for the infrastructure that provides consumers access to affordable broadband.**
- **The FCC should continue to use the embedded cost methodology for the purposes of determining rural ILEC high-cost support under the existing and revised definition of universal service.**
- **When considering the cost basis for support the FCC should adopt a plan that lays the groundwork for providing explicit support for the deployment and maintenance of the broadband infrastructure needed to ensure access to advanced telecommunications and information services in high-cost, rural and insular areas.**
- **The FCC should recognize that different levels of support may be appropriate for different types of broadband technologies.**
- **The FCC should eliminate the identical support rule and require competitive local exchange carrier (CETC) support to be based on CETC costs and require CETCs to apply similar cost allocation rules that currently apply to rural ILECs.**
- **The FCC should retain the current definition of a “rural telephone company” for purposes of receiving rural high-cost universal service support.**
- **The FCC should expand the base of universal service fund (USF) contributors to include all cable, wireless, and satellite providers of broadband Internet access and facilities-based and non-facilities-based VoIP and IP-enabled service providers.**