

OPENING STATEMENT
JOINT CONFERENCE ON ADVANCED SERVICES
COMMISSIONER MARK K. JOHNSON
REGULATORY COMMISSION OF ALASKA
NOVEMBER 6, 2008

“...the value of an individual’s telephone service depends on the number of people with whom he or she can communicate. The larger the number of people who choose to buy service, the more each person’s service is worth to him or her. That is, the social value of an individual’s purchase of telephone service may exceed the value of that service to the individual.”¹

It is not difficult to resurrect language many years old on the subject of societal benefits from communications networks. It is not necessary because many of us have grown up with a deep understanding that it is true. Our own experiences confirm it: The personal wonder of speaking to a family member hundreds or thousands of miles away; the real-time accounts of dramatic events.

The technology evolves, the need for services expands and the terminology changes, but our responsibility as policymakers remains: To bring the benefits of telecommunications to as many Americans as possible; to ensure that they can contact and learn from each other; to see that we remain an engine of economic opportunity for the world at large.

Today we will hear a well-crafted presentation of the benefits of the extension of broadband services to Americans. The residents of my own State of Alaska have benefited enormously from the deployment of advanced telecommunications services.

While great progress has been made in the deployment of new technologies and there is much to learn from experiences around the country, it is important for us to create strategies to address both aspects of our technology: Speed and availability. Thus, broadband at 768 kbps is just the beginning. We need to consider policies that

- permit the delivery of data at 2.5 mbps, 10 mbps and higher; and
- ensure that these services are extended to Americans throughout the country.

We also need to understand the effect of national policies on the development and deployment of infrastructure for Internet Protocol version 6 and the ultra-high capacity Internet 2, as well as technologies that are being showcased here at the Wireless Communications Association. We need to be forward-thinking and craft plans that respond to future developments.

This is the task as I see it. Clearly much more needs to be done and the job is never complete. I look forward to working with my colleagues on this project.

¹ Social Objectives and Competition in Common Carrier Communications: Incompatible or Inseparable? at 9-10, Federal Communications Commission, Office of Plans and Policy 80-01; Nina Cornell, Daniele Kelly, Peter R. Greenhalgh; April 1980.