



Contact: Wendy Mann, CAE, Coalition to Keep America Connected
703-351-2148, info@keepamericaconnected.org

COALITION TO KEEP AMERICA CONNECTED APPLAUDS FCC COMMISSIONER KEVIN MARTIN'S POSITION ON COMPETITIVE ELIGIBLE TELECOMMUNICATIONS CARRIERS

Asks Senate Commerce Committee to Keep Martin's Comments in Mind During Today's Hearing on Universal Service

Washington, D.C., March 1, 2007 – As the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee hears testimony on the Universal Service Fund from policymakers and industry representatives, the Coalition to Keep America Connected today applauded FCC Commissioner Kevin Martin's comments made at a Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service en banc hearing the previous week and asks the members of the committee to keep Martin's comments in mind. At the hearing, Martin publicly asserted that growth in the Universal Service Fund (USF) could be directly linked to universal service support provided to competitive eligible telecommunications carriers (CETCs), and not to incumbent local exchange carriers (ILECs) providing carrier of last resort services in high-cost areas.

“We appreciate the significance of Chairman Martin's decisive statements in attributing out of control growth in the USF to the designation of multiple wireless CETCs in rural service areas. Wireless carriers are incented to seek ETC status by the windfall revenues in universal service support they receive due to rules that may set their levels of support higher than their actual costs. These rules are uneconomic, not competitively neutral, and are a burden on the nation's ratepayers,” Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA) Executive Vice President and Coalition Representative Kelly Worthington stated. “The Senate Commerce Committee would greatly benefit from Martin's clear explanation of the CETC issue. The coalition looks forward

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to hearing comments at the hearing made by FCC commissioners Michael Copps and Deborah Taylor Tate, both of whom serve on the Federal-State Board on Universal Service and were in attendance at the en banc hearing during Martin's remarks on CETCs."

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The Coalition to Keep America Connected is dedicated to ensuring that all consumers have access to affordable telecommunications services and the latest technologies—no matter where they live. The effort is organized by four rural telecom associations, whose memberships include 700 small and midsize communications companies. Together these companies serve millions of consumers and 40 percent of the landmass across America. Visit us at www.keepamericaconnected.org.