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**WTA RESPONDS TO FEDERAL-STATE JOINT BOARD RECOMMENDED
DECISION ON LONG-TERM USF REFORM**

Washington, D.C. (November 21, 2007) -- Western Telecommunications Alliance (WTA) today responded to the release by the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service of its Recommended Decision on long-term Universal Service Fund (USF) reform. On November 21, the Joint Board released a reform proposal to create three separate funds within USF to support broadband, mobility, and providers of last resort.

“WTA is encouraged that the Joint Board has taken on the challenging task of reforming USF,” said Kelly Worthington, WTA’s Executive Vice President. “It has long been recognized that inefficiencies such as the identical support rule and providing USF support to multiple competitive eligible telecommunications carriers (CETCs) in the same service territory needed to be addressed, and this proposal does just that.

“WTA has concerns about capping high-cost support at current levels as well as indications that reverse auctions may be a wise future method for distributing USF support. We share the concerns of Joint Board member and FCC Commissioner Michael Copps that there are many ‘unanswered questions’ regarding reverse auctions and that these questions should be addressed, but WTA looks forward to working with the FCC and Joint Board on this and other issues outlined in the Recommended Decision.”

“For WTA members to continue to provide high quality telecommunications services, including broadband and wireless services, in some of the most costly and hardest to reach areas of the country, it is critical to ensure there will be a strong and stable universal service program in the future,” Worthington continued. “I’m pleased that the Joint Board’s Recommended Decision acknowledges that incumbent rural telephone companies have ‘done a commendable job of providing broadband to nearly all their customers’ and that maintaining this network is essential.”

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Western Telecommunications Alliance represents approximately 250 rural telecommunications companies in 24 states west of the Mississippi River. Most members serve fewer than 3,000 customers overall, and fewer than 500 customers per exchange. Western Telecommunications Alliance aims to unite a diverse industry to deliver influence in the western states and in Washington, DC that reflects its members’ importance in providing high quality telecommunications services to rural America. For more information about WTA, contact Kelly Worthington, Executive Vice President at (406) 443-6377; kelly@w-t-a.org; or visit www.w-t-a.org.