

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Establishing a 5G Fund for Rural America*, GN Docket No. 20-32, Second Report and Order, Order on Reconsideration and Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (August 28, 2024)

It's clear why this order is so important: when we're talking about wireless connectivity, far too many Americans remain in areas where there are no Gs at all. For communities still lacking services, the consequences can be measured in population declines, lost jobs, and missed opportunities. By making 5G more accessible, this order brings us one step closer toward our shared goal of closing the digital divide, and setting us on a course where all can share in the benefits of connectivity, no matter your zip code.

In particular, I want to thank Chairwoman Rosenworcel for working with me on an issue that's been a pillar of my work at the Commission; Tribal engagement. Thinking critically on how we engage with Tribes is foundational. Having the best process possible will add more certainty and predictability for everyone involved in the 5G Fund. Honoring Tribal sovereignty is an essential part of the deployment process, and leveraging the unique knowledge and experience of Tribal governments will stretch funds further and connect more Tribal lands.

I appreciate the hard work of the staff involved in this item and look forward to continued engagement on this vital effort.