

Statement of the Honorable Marsha Blackburn (TN-07)
The Phoenix Center for Advanced Legal & Economic Public Policy Studies
2007 Annual U.S. Telecoms Symposium
Presentation of the Phoenix Center's 2007 Jerry B. Duvall Public Service Award
November 28, 2007

I thank the Phoenix Center, particularly Lawrence Spiwak and his dedicated staff, for allowing me to submit the following statement in honor of my great friend and colleague, Commissioner Deborah Tate. Though regretful that I cannot be with you today, it gives me great pleasure to celebrate Commissioner Tate for receiving the 2007 Duvall Public Service Award.

Quite simply, the Phoenix Center could not have chosen a more appropriate recipient for this prestigious honor.

I've known Commissioner Tate for more than 25 years, and during that time we've worked together on many critical issues important to the community in Tennessee, and in the public policy arena in Washington, D.C. Like many that have the privilege of working with her, I've come to know Commissioner Tate as a consensus builder who works diligently to find common ground between opposing parties to bring them to the negotiating table.

Since her arrival at the Tennessee Regulatory Authority, where she served as Chair, and most recently at the Federal Communications Commission, Commissioner Tate has become a student of telecommunications issues and a leading advocate for principled reform in the industry. The commissioner is now a leading expert on the issues, technologies, and the opportunities and pitfalls that lie ahead for the next generation of innovation.

Yet her immersion in the details of telecommunications policy and unique consensus building skills have never been more important than during her leadership as Chair of the Federal-State Joint Board on Universal Service. As we all know, Commissioner Tate is and has been the driving force behind the Commission's effort to provide meaningful reform for the Universal Service Fund.

This effort recently came to fruition following the Joint Board's recommendation to the Commission on reforming the high cost universal service fund, and Commissioner Tate deserves a great deal of credit for her leadership in bringing diverse parties together in highly regarded and heralded plan to reform the Fund.

But more importantly, Commissioner Tate has always been a true champion for the constituents and community in Tennessee, and now here in the Capitol area. We've worked together on charitable causes for 25 years, and whether the project calls for fundraising for the Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt, or the Renewal House for women rebuilding lives, Commissioner Tate's energy and work ethic has improved the quality of life for the community at large.

And though I cannot even begin to list her myriad leadership responsibilities throughout the non-profit community in Tennessee and in Washington, as a Board Member for Centerstone, Tennessee's largest behavioral healthcare organization, Tennessee Voices for Children, Tennessee Tomorrow, Inc., and an Elder at Westminster Presbyterian Church, suffice it to say that Commissioner Tate is making a difference in our community.

Debbie, it gives me great pleasure for you to receive the 2007 Jerry B. Duvall Public Service Award recognizing outstanding contributions in telecommunications policy by a public leader in the United States. There is no other public official who deserves it more than you, and I look forward to our continued work together.

Once again, I thank the Phoenix Center for allowing me to share in recognition of Commissioner Tate's leadership in public service, and thank all the Symposium attendees for your patience. Enjoy the afternoon.