

# FCC Issues Universal Service Reform Proposals

April 22, 2010

On April 21, 2010, the FCC issued a [Notice regarding proposed universal service reforms](#). The document is 28 pages long plus some lengthy appendices. The Notice itself is divided into a Notice of Inquiry section discussing steps to implement the Connect America Fund proposed in the [National Broadband Plan](#), and a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking addressing specific ideas about reducing amounts currently committed to the High Cost Support portion of the USF program. The High Cost Support aspect of USF consumes about half the total of \$8 billion now spent on universal service support each year. The procedural difference between the NOI and the NPRM portions is this: a Notice of Inquiry generally cannot be followed by the adoption of rules without first issuing a follow-on Notice of Proposed Rulemaking. Thus, an NOI tends to be more ethereal and not focused on near term action. The NPRM portion, on the other hand, can result in rules to be adopted at any time after the expiration of the public comment period. The FCC itself described the Notice as "the first in a series of proceedings to implement" the National Broadband Plan.

Public comments on the Notices are due 60 days from publication in the Federal Register, and Reply comments are due 30 days later.