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Christian
Communicators
Impacting
the World



An Open Letter to FCC Acting Chairman Michael Copps

May 21, 2009

The Honorable Michael Copps
Acting Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Copps:

I have read with great interest your widely distributed comments from last Thursday's Free Press media reform summit at the Newseum. In light of that, I believe it is necessary to clarify the views of the National Religious Broadcasters (NRB), America's preeminent association representing Christian broadcasters and communicators. We are surprised by several of the characterizations contained in your speech.

First, you addressed those who, like NRB, are wary of the use of "diversity" initiatives in broadcasting ownership, when those initiatives could result in a planned restructuring of broadcast content. You even called such concerned entities "conspiracy theorists". Yet our position is very straightforward: we do not want the FCC – or any government agency for that matter – to directly or indirectly move broadcast content toward *any particular political, social, or religious direction*. The mission of our organization is to ensure that our Christian broadcasters have equal access to all means of electronic communication, so they may fully use those means to transmit the life-changing message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We desire the same freedom, i.e. the freedom to shape and determine broadcast content, for secular broadcasters as well.

We also fully support women and minority media ownership. Our primary concern is with government control of the marketplace of ideas, which affects all broadcasters. Whether such control is called the "Fairness Doctrine," or masked by some other name, is irrelevant. We do not want *any* broadcasters (religious, secular, minority, etc.) to be subject to a heavy-handed system of federal regulation that is fraught with problems and oblivious to the benefits of a reasonably free market. That's why NRB supported the reasoned approach in the FCC's March 5, 2008, *Report and Order* from the Diversification of Ownership proceeding. In that Order, the Commission used a "race-and-gender neutral" method of encouraging small business and new entrant broadcasters, thereby assisting both minorities and women. To do otherwise, as Commissioner

McDowell pointed out, would probably render the Commission's actions unconstitutional.

Yet you are critical of that approach. While we can intelligently debate differing strategies to improve broadcasting, the statements in your recent speech were unjustified. The National Religious Broadcasters and other media groups have legitimate concerns about keeping government out of the business of restructuring media ownership in a way that could necessarily result in a shift of broadcasting viewpoint. We do not want an artificial increase of media ownership for the purpose of causing a decrease in "conservative" or traditional values media content, and an increase in liberal or "progressive" programming.

The logic of our concerns seems self evident in light of the proposals in your presentation last week, regarding the expansion of government control over content through the establishment of new "public interest" guidelines. You advocate for "clear standards that can be fairly and vigorously enforced". It is obvious how the "vigorous" enforcement of a new "public interest" definition could be used to disadvantage broadcasters who transmit legitimate, but unpopular, viewpoints.

Finally, it is ironic to me that while addressing the need for "diversity" in media ownership and disparaging those groups like NRB who counsel caution, not a single Christian broadcaster was invited to participate in the FCC's recently comprised "diversity" committee.

Chairman Copps, I would welcome the opportunity to discuss any of these issues with you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Frank Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

Frank Wright, Ph.D.
President & CEO