



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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PRESS STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL K. POWELL ON SPECTRUM POLICY TASK FORCE

The foundations of our current spectrum policy are cracking beneath the weight of innovation and widespread consumer use of spectrum-based services. This is no surprise, since most of our policies date from the 1920s. What is surprising is how difficult and elusive fundamental spectrum policy change has been. I initiated the Spectrum Policy Task Force to jump start spectrum policy reform. Its goal: to develop a spectrum policy worthy of today's spectrum-based services. These services have not only transformed everyday American life, but have also served as a catalyst for research and development and technological investment. Our policies must focus on what consumers want and what technology can deliver – not on old models of command and control regulatory intervention.

Today's consumer demands access to interference-free spectrum when they need it. When we turn on our cell phone, we expect it to work. When we flip on the set top box, we expect a DBS signal. When we tote our laptops onto the porch, we expect WiFi to deliver broadband. We know what interference is and we experience it virtually everyday. It is not an abstract concept, but rather a hindrance to everyday productivity and leisure. In contrast, when our devices are not on, we could care less about interference or whether spectrum is available.

Spectrum-based technology developers know this. They have increasingly developed technologies that make signals more vigorous and deliver communications when and where people need them. They have largely crossed over to digital transmission techniques to use spectrum more efficiently. They have developed sensory and adaptive technologies that allow transmitters and receivers to interact dynamically with the environment and to "find" open spectrum for use only when they need it.

Unfortunately our spectrum policy is behind both consumers and technology. By initiating the Task Force, I hoped to begin a dialog about how to catch up. Consumers and technology deserve better. Rather than waiting for these technologies to become widely available and then trying to catch up through regulation, the Task Force report represents a chance to get ahead. By creating policies that will allow these technologies to be commercially deployed as soon as they are ready – rather than waiting long periods of time for regulatory reform – we hope to create an environment in which innovative technologies will prosper. In such an environment, technologies may be developed faster, deployed more rapidly, and thus provide desired spectrum-based services to the American people.

The Commission is chartered to serve the public interest. The public has made their desire for interference-free spectrum-based services quite clear. The challenge now rests with us to deliver.