



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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FCC COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS ANNOUNCES BROADCAST LICENSE RENEWAL TOWN MEETINGS

Washington – Testifying before the Senate Commerce Committee today, FCC Commissioner Michael Copps announced that he would hold a series of town meetings to give concerned citizens the opportunity to express their views on whether their local radio and television stations are serving the public interest and should have their licenses renewed. The announcement comes after a divided FCC voted to eliminate or weaken a wide range of media consolidation protections, prompting Commissioner Copps and others to warn that broadcast localism, diversity, and competition were in danger. Congress is currently debating reversing key parts of this decision after a huge public outcry.

Copps said: “As part of the license renewal process, I believe it is important to go out and hear from members of the community. But that hasn’t happened for years. It’s time for that to change. As we begin the next round of license renewals for radio this fall and for television in 2004, I intend to hold a series of town meetings in regions where renewals are due in order to hear from communities how their airwaves are being used.”

The American people, not broadcast corporations, own the public airwaves. Congress grants broadcasters the right to use the spectrum in exchange for their commitment to serve the “public interest.” Every eight years the FCC reviews the performance of each radio and television station and only renews a station’s right to use the public spectrum if they meet their public interest commitment. But today, the FCC grants so-called “postcard” renewals after a minimal review and no public outreach to local communities. Most people do not even know that they can challenge the renewal of a local radio or television station if they believe that the station is not living up to its obligation due to a lack of local coverage, a lack of diversity, excessive indecency and violence, or for other concerns important to the community.

Copps continued: “How can we know if licensees are serving their local communities without hearing from the local community? I intend to go to local communities to listen and to learn.”

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