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

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CGB CHIEF LAUDS GOVERNMENT-TO-GOVERNMENT COOPERATION AT CONFERENCE OF AFFILIATED TRIBES OF NORTHWEST INDIANS

Urges Audience to Join with FCC to Increase 67.9% Telephone Penetration Rate

Noting that “the partnership between the FCC and Affiliated Tribes of Northwest Indians (ATNI) . . . holds a bright promise for the future,” K. Dane Snowden, chief of the FCC’s Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, pledged that the two organizations would “work together to ensure that American Indians enjoy the benefits of the telecommunications revolution.”

Snowden made these remarks in a speech delivered on September 23 in Pendleton, OR, at the 50th Annual Conference of the ATNI. Established by Tribal leaders in 1953, ATNI is a non-profit organization that represents 54 tribes from primarily Oregon, Washington, Idaho, with additional member Tribes in Alaska, Montana, Nevada, and Northern California.

He urged continued cooperation to increase telephone subscribership in Indian Country. Snowden noted that the 2000 census estimated that 67.9% of all American Indian households living on American Indian Reservations and Off-Reservation Trust Lands had telephone service. The comparable figure ten years earlier was 46.6%. He said that, “while some progress has been made, much remains to be done.” He urged his audience to join with the FCC to “collectively redouble our efforts”.

Snowden said, “The FCC is committed to [the FCC-Indian] . . . partnership, as recognized in our June 2000 Policy Statement reaffirming the Commission’s recognition of tribal sovereignty and the trust relationship. As that Policy Statement establishes, we value a government-to-government relationship with federally recognized Indian tribes and consultation is our principal means of identifying and resolving issues relevant to Indian Country.”

He outlined the work of the FCC’s Indian Telecommunications Initiatives (ITI), which encompasses all of the FCC’s outreach efforts in Indian Country and involves meetings, tours, conferences, rulemakings, and other activities. While the ITI is administered by the Consumer & Governmental Affairs Bureau, Snowden noted that FCC Chairman Michael K. Powell and the other commissioners have participated frequently in the ITI and have fully supported its goals.

The ITI program is designed to build partnerships to target specific concerns, identify potential solutions, and bring affordable, quality telecommunications services to Indian Country. Snowden outlined the ITI's goals: to increase the telephone penetration rate among tribal communities; to facilitate the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure in Indian Country necessary to provide telecommunications services; and to inform tribes and tribal consumers about financial support available through federal government programs, including Universal Service Fund programs.

As part of its efforts to ensure that Tribes are fully informed about their telecom options, Snowden mentioned that the FCC has developed specific publications directed to Native American issues. "Our ITI booklet, brochure, and fact sheet are some of the publications that were created specifically for the American tribes", he said. He also mentioned the FCC's Web page dedicated to Indian issues, including information about spectrum auctions and environmental impact issues, at www.fcc.gov/indians.

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