

**REMARKS OF FCC COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS
TASK FORCE ON MEDIA & CHILDHOOD OBESITY
MARCH 21, 2007**

Thank you Senator Brownback and also Senator Harkin for hosting us today and for your strong and active leadership of this new initiative. I am pleased to be here today along with my FCC colleagues, Chairman Kevin Martin and Commissioner Deborah Tate, and I am encouraged by the attendance of so many representatives from business, health care and public interest advocacy. This broad representation bespeaks a broad understanding that childhood obesity affects us all in one way or another—personally, socially, economically, as individuals and as a country. My hope today is that this new public sector-private sector partnership will develop sufficient momentum to make a real, tangible difference in developing strategies to tackle—really tackle—the public health care crisis that is childhood obesity. While it is good that all these individuals and groups have come together, the effort will be judged only by its results.

I have an interest, understandable given what I do, in the role our media should be playing here. You know, media often serves us well, but sometimes not so well. And sometimes it can be both part of a problem and part of the solution to a particular problem. Television, radio, cable and now the Internet are the most powerful influences at work in the world today. That makes media America's most important business. When used for good, media can inspire children's imaginations, expose them to powerful ideas, educate and lay the foundation for them developing into happy, productive—and, yes, healthy—adults. But when media is used to mislead and misinform and under-perform, it can—it does—inflict lasting harms, physical as well as psychological and social. Here we are dealing with a public health crisis that our commercial media has sometimes exacerbated, but also one in which public-spirited media can make more of a positive difference going forward.

Today, too many parents—with good reason—think of media as something they need to *protect* their children from. That's sad. Why can't we make sure that our media becomes something that actually *helps* children? Certainly this ought to be a national priority. I am glad to see some media companies here today. I wish there were more. Perhaps more will join. I hope so.

I am pleased to see those who came from media as well as the numerous participants from the food and beverage and advertising industries gathered here today, as well as medical experts and consumer advocates and children, too. If we are going to make headway against the truly appalling statistics on childhood obesity that we've already heard and will hear more about today, it will only be because all of us make a joint commitment to make a difference and because all of us take collective action to make that difference happen.

So my message to this Task Force is: Don't be bashful. I hope it will push the envelope of its charter and provide recommendations and an action plan that will allow all of us to look back with pride on being part of the effort being launched here today. The last thing we need is yet another report laying out the problem of childhood obesity. We need a plan of action. And this Task Force is now on the line, with lots of people watching and looking, to provide it.

So thank you to the Congressional, industry and citizen leadership that has brought us here in this good cause. I welcome the opportunity to be part of the effort. And I look forward to an early, robust and action-oriented result.

Thank you very much.