

Remarks of Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
At Women of AT&T Event, Nashville, TN
(as prepared)

September 20, 2008

Introduction

Good Morning. Thank you for inviting me to be part of this ceiling-shattering and timely event to showcase women who have truly “made it” in a male-dominated sector of the economy. I am so pleased to be here today among women of your caliber. Throughout my nearly three years as a Commissioner at the FCC, and long before that as a state official, I have sought to champion those issues that most closely affect women, children, and minorities, and I would like to touch on a few of those in my remarks.

Tennessee’s Impact

In addition to the esteemed panel you have assembled here today, a number of great Tennessee women have served as mentors to me. Sissy Daughtery taught at Vanderbilt Law School and became the first female on the Tennessee Supreme Court and now serves on the 6th Circuit, with my former boss and the country’s youngest female federal judge, Julia Smith Gibbons. Over half the judges in Davidson County are now women---up from zero---when I came to work here. Progress for women in the upper echelons of government service has finally taken hold. In 2002, Kim McMillan became our state’s first female Majority Leader. Just two weeks ago, Tennessee swore in its first female chief justice, Janice Holder. I am proud that both Governors I worked with appointed more females to office than any before them, including Beth Fortune, the first female Press Secretary in Tennessee history.

I suppose I have always felt some “calling” because of the part our state played in the history of the women’s suffrage movement. As you all know, when thirty-five of the necessary thirty-six states had ratified the amendment, the battle came to Nashville, Tennessee. Anti-suffrage and pro-suffrage forces from around the nation descended on the town—probably like the Presidential debate at Belmont in a few weeks.

One young legislator, 24 year old Harry Burn, had voted with the anti-suffrage forces to that time. But his mother had urged that he vote for the amendment and for suffrage. When he saw that the vote was very close, and with his anti-suffrage vote would be tied 48 to 48, he decided to vote as his mother had urged him: for the right

of women to vote. And so on August 18, 1920, Tennessee became the 36th and deciding state to ratify. So, teach your sons well my friends!

Children's Issues

As a policymaker, but more importantly as a mother of three, I continue to be interested in those issues most affecting our children—from childhood obesity, to internet safety, to broadcast decency, to parental tools for blocking objectionable content. While at the FCC, I have continued to be a voice for families, yet believing in personal responsibility first. Parents have a responsibility to parent. But we must give them the information and tools they need to do the job. Our children live in an almost ubiquitous online world from our teenager's cell phone to their laptop; even something as seemingly innocuous as an Xbox can take our children down dangerous byways of the darkest parts of the internet. That's why I've been speaking to teen groups and parents and CEOs about educating parents, schools, and children about the "3 Ps": privacy, piracy, and pornography. More specifically, the risks of predators to our privacy, the pirating of our creative talents, and most concerning--child pornography. These risks emanate from "the myth of the safety of the internet." While extraordinary opportunities have occurred from e-government to telesurgery; from distance learning degrees to eagriculture; we have not fully appreciated the very real and present danger that the internet can pose to children's health, emotional development and safety.

Internet Safety

What was once termed a "virtual world" is now our teens very real world- 24/7. According to many state Attorneys General, 1 in 7 children have been solicited online (1 in 25 have been "aggressively" solicited. For example, they have been asked for an in-person meeting.)

28% of teens having their own blog.

27% maintain their own webpage.

39% share artwork, photos, or videos online.

If you have teenagers, you know that this can be extremely personal, private information or material. And, because of the myth that the internet is both "safe" and "private"; we should be teaching our children that it is public and forever. College

applications, job interviews and future employment can all be derailed by posting information that may be untrue or unattractive at best and illegal at worst.

If that doesn't concern you, how about that 12% of all websites contain pornography? And, something we are all learning about: cyberbullying. Over 42% --almost half--of children have been bullied online. I saw my 17 year old son experience this and it was heartbreaking; even more so because the blogger attacking my son--- was a dad.

And, now, the Internet is going totally mobile. US teen wireless subscribers (12-17) surpassed 16 million in 2007. This is up 12% from 2006. It is much harder to control where your children go online when the internet is a tap away, in the palm of their hand. Some countries are taking strong steps regarding cell phones and children. In Japan, officials are encouraging telecom providers to offer phones with GPS and talk capabilities only. I continue to call on you—your industry---to be part of the dialogue and compete for who has the “best tools” to protect our children.

Broadcast Decency

Most Americans think about the FCC in terms of our indecency rulings such as the Janet Jackson episode. Some Members of Congress as well as stars such as Geena Davis have also raised issues regarding the depiction of women in all types of programming. Others are concerned about the effect upon our teenagers—especially girls—regarding the aggrandizement of promiscuity and sexual activity at younger ages. During prime time shows, violence, profanity, or sexual content is seen every 3.5 minutes. In 2007, incidences of sexual content had increased 22% (since 2001) and incidents of violence up 52.4% (since 2001); with a 75% increase in instances of violence since 1998.

Past surveys have shown that 75% of the 1,505 adults polled from March 17-21 would like to see tighter enforcement of government rules on broadcast content, particularly when children are most likely to be watching. 60% of adults want broadcast regulations expanded to cable.

Why am I discussing broadcasting? Because as your company becomes a major video operator and provider, you must begin to consider how you should deal not with the government regulator, but with the court of public opinion. Will you include the TV ratings on internet and cell phones? Will you link parents to downloadable tools? Will you provide consumer information at your retail stores about the risks of adding internet access to your child's cell phone? Will you be the company that says “we've gone family friendly”? You may be new to this table, but you need to be part of the dialogue moving forward.

Women in Ownership and Leadership

To give you an idea of the scope of this problem we heard about as we held hearings across the country (including one in Nashville), consider that while women make up over 50% of the population, they own less than 5% of the commercial television stations in this country- and less than 4% of radio stations.

Unfortunately, the under-representation of women in media is only a symptom of a much larger problem across all industries. One that we should all be working toward resolving. Today women run only 8 of the Fortune 500 companies. And 67 of the Fortune 500 don't have a single woman as a corporate officer.

Other stats to consider:

- Women's share of Fortune 500 Board of Directors Committee Chairs = 15.1%
- Women comprise, on average, less than three out of 13 board directors at a Fortune 50 company.
- Percentage of women of color board directors = 3%
- 59 companies had *zero* women directors, and only 83 had three or more women directors.
- 74 companies had *zero* women corporate officers

I was extremely pleased that last December, the FCC adopted 13 specific initiatives aimed at promoting female and minority media ownership. As I have spoken to groups of women all over the country, and I continue to hear that access to capital is the greatest hurdle they face in attempting to enter the media industry—or probably any business for that matter. One idea I've championed is an Access to Capital Conference, in which female and minority broadcasters would meet prospective Wall Street Investors to learn more about the opportunities for and how they should prepare in order to obtain financing. I am also happy to report that in July, the entire FCC hosted this Access to Capital Conference in NY with panels of private equity and institutional lenders as well as women who have been successful and some who are hoping to be. Hopefully, this event will be an annual opportunity to link investors with investment; the engine and the entrepreneur; especially women and minority entrepreneurs!

In terms of salaries, it appears the next generation may be showing signs of improvement. While those of us 25 and older make only 79.4% of what our male counterparts make, those 25 and younger, working full-time, make 93.2% of what their male counterparts make. This is an encouraging statistic. Also encouraging are examples like the one often cited by the head of the ITU (International Telecommunications Union) who points to a corporative initiative he developed that allows women to count non-consecutive years of service when computing seniority, recognizing that women may be in and out of the work force in order to raise children—and should not be punished for it. I hope more U.S. companies will begin to take such steps.

I continue to work with the National Association of Broadcasters on events such as Women Leadership Day and the NAB Education Foundation, which provides an in-depth educational series. I continue to urge broadcasters—indeed all corporations--- to establish structured and ongoing mentoring and internship programs.

The bottom line is that this country needs more women in the media industry, and not just for equality's sake, or because women can improve bottom lines, but because women bring a unique perspective, voice, and approach to programming that is beneficial to the industry and the American public as a whole. So while you thought you were a telecommunications company; in this converged, digital, instantaneous cyber-world, you are also a broadband and wireless and media company. Looking at this group, it looks like your sector may be performing better with regard to women and minorities and I encourage you to reach back and pull young women throughout your companies and industries forward and to stand on your shoulders.

Conclusion

While I have laid out several of the issues I believe need to be addressed as they relate specifically to women, there have also been huge strides—not to mention the Presidential race. With each issue before me, I try and see opportunities rather than problems; creative, voluntary solutions rather than unnecessary government mandates and most of all, consensus over conflict. Women— all of you here--- have made tremendous sacrifices and balanced your successful careers with your personal life while being major contributors to our economic well-being. However, you have also brought heart, soul, 2 good ears and a lot of elbow grease to the corporate boardroom. And we are all better for it.