

**REMARKS OF COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS  
MEDIA OWNERSHIP PUBLIC INTEREST GROUP PANEL  
WASHINGTON, DC  
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Good Morning, thanks everyone for coming, and welcome to the launch this week of the 2010 Quadrennial Review of the Commission's Media Ownership Rules.

A very interesting session was held here yesterday morning—a Policy Scholars' Panel. It addressed urgent questions about how to conduct a credible media ownership review and it also produced some new research results and some indication of new thinking in the groves of academe. Unfortunately, the event was poorly covered by the media and didn't get the coverage it merited. This is not the first time this has happened with this important issue—but it was disappointing just the same.

I'm not going to slow down today's panel with extensive remarks. I did speak at some length yesterday and I've asked Jamila Bess Johnson to distribute a printed version of my remarks to each of the panelists, and there are additional copies in the back. But let me take a few minutes to summarize.

There are many important issues pending before the FCC. In long-term importance, none exceeds—and I don't think any matches—the future of our media environment. If we can't fix what's broken, if we can't rejuvenate broadcast journalism, reopen shuttered newsrooms, put the brakes on mind-numbing monoprogramming, stop the dumbing-down of our civic dialogue and take advantage of the great potential of local broadcasting, then maybe those who want that spectrum back have the better of the argument. Time will tell.

Except we don't have time. These issues have been pending before this Commission since I got here and we have done almost nothing to stem the tide of media consolidation and lax government oversight. The consolidation was momentarily slowed by the current economic downturn—itsself largely the result of the kind of policies in finance and other businesses that I've been complaining about in media for years. But consolidation is coming back, and once the economic indices start heading north, you'll see media properties galore—all pining for those elusive “economies of scale” whose chase doomed so many companies over the past few years.

As for government and the FCC, we've been asleep at the switch when we weren't being downright destructive. Twenty-plus years of heedless deregulation eviscerated almost every public interest guideline we had. Media companies took advantage of that. Don't blame them. Blame us. And while I'm on that, let me say right here that there are many broadcasters who strive to serve the public interest and who do darned good jobs of it. But their ranks have been thinned, to say the least, and we've made it—Wall Street and Washington, DC have made it—ever more difficult for them to act as they would like to act while the tune has been called by Wall Street and see-no-evil government regulators.

So now what? We're launching a new Quadrennial review today. I say "Great!" Let's get the facts, ask the new questions about the impact of today's economy, look seriously—for the first time—at the impact of private equity ownership, try to understand how the Internet affects all this, and make some recommendations.

But there are also some things we should *not* be doing in this Quadrennial Review. It would be squandering an historic opportunity to set things aright if all the outstanding media issues before this Commission are pushed into a review that's bound to take a year or more to even write—let alone act upon. Some of the most critically-important media issues are already teed up, they rest upon solid records, and they are ready-to-go. And if they don't go soon, they may never go, because the window of opportunity that is open to us now will not be forever open, and we could one day be castigating ourselves for not harvesting the field when we could.

Three of those issues—and I talk about them a little more at length in my remarks from yesterday—are minority and female ownership, localism, and public interest licensing.

On minority and female ownership, the Diversity Committee has recently given us excellent suggestions for moving ahead and even a tool for incentivizing minority ownership while we finalize longer-term strategies to reverse a sad and shocking reality. We should act now.

On localism, we launched a proceeding in 2003, the record has been refreshed, and it, too, deserves action now. Let's not be intimidated by a few loud and strident voices trying to make "localism" a dirty word. It's not. Localism is making sure that our broadcast media spend some quality time covering what is going on in the communities where people live—local news and information, local music, and the rich cultural diversity that makes America America. Some shout "communism" from their perches—as if people who have had their fill of shuttered newsrooms, infotainment and an increasingly uncivil civic dialogue are somehow un-American.

And then there is the urgent need to repair our licensing regime—or "un-regime"—here at the FCC. Granting slam-dunk license renewals every eight years—without any semblance of public interest review—is just not credible. It's not what the statute envisions or what the public interest requires. I'll spare you the rest, but I'll tell you this—nothing this Commission could do would bring such positive results.

So as we set sail here, I look to a thorough Quadrennial review, but I ask my colleagues to move full speed ahead on these other proceedings—minority and female ownership, localism, and public-interest licensing. We've got the facts, we have the record and we have the responsibility and the need to act now. As I said yesterday, we need to do justice to America's media needs—and justice delayed is justice denied.

Thanks.