

**FCC COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**  
**REMARKS AT THE STATE OF THE NET PRECONFERENCE OF**  
**THE CONGRESSIONAL INTERNET CAUCUS**  
**WASHINGTON, DC**  
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Thank you very much. I appreciate the return engagement as you gather for what should be not only an interesting, but hopefully an influential, gathering tomorrow. I especially want to thank the Congressional Internet Caucus and its co-chairs—Senators Leahy and Thune and Congressmen Boucher and Goodlatte—for championing the Internet way back to 1996 and beyond—that was a millennium ago on Internet time. Thank you also to the many organizations—public interest groups, academics, and industry—who during that time have come together to participate in forward-looking and always-informative events on Internet policy. And I appreciate the role EDUCAUSE and NCTA played in bringing together so many stakeholders at this preconference.

What a year it's been for broadband and the Internet. Not only all the new devices, services and innovation that seem to debut just about every day thanks to mind-bending innovation and enterprise, but also for your role in developing the push for a national broadband plan. We pushed together for years—you and I—to drag this challenge to the forefront and to get it priority status—and now it's actually happening. The biggest reasons why are sitting in this audience this afternoon.

Since we launched the Broadband Notice of Inquiry while I was Acting Chair last April, we've had months of data-crammed record-building at the FCC and hundreds of events to make sense of that still-growing record. We've had hearings, workshops, web discussions, twitters and tweets and everything in between so we can present to Congress and the President and the country a visionary and at the same time practical strategy for building this century's most important infrastructure. In the process we've answered a lot of the questions posed in the NOI. But we've also seen there are a lot of new questions for us to ponder as we try to understand all the implications of what these new technologies and services are capable of and how they affect every aspect of our national life.

It's been a great education for us but also, I think, for the country. Across the land, as I attend hearings and talk to folks, I have seen growing awareness that broadband is no longer the province of techno-speak and the Internet geek, but rather that people more and more understand that just about every great challenge facing our country—be it job creation, education, healthcare, energy independence, climate change, opening the doors of opportunity for all, the future of journalism, civic engagement, you name it—every one of these will have to have a broadband component at the center of its resolution. Broadband is coming to be seen for what it really is: the Great Enabler. And how well we enable it to enable us will spell the difference between America just muddling through, or opening the door to many more years of U.S. prosperity and world leadership.

The full reach of this goal will only be realized through the leadership, work and investment of the private sector. It remains the great locomotive of our economy. But, like every other great infrastructure build-out that has been achieved over the course of our nation's history, going all the way back to the very beginning, private sector know-how, energy, and innovation work best when coupled to national objectives and visionary public policy. That way, we build America together. And, in fact, that is how we *did* build America. And it is how we'll keep building it.

But it's no slam-dunk that just because we generally met our infrastructure challenges before, we necessarily will here, too. You don't need to hear me expound again today on how I view the result of the sins of our recent public policy past and how it sometimes got in the way of our doing the things that really needed to be accomplished. But wouldn't it be an awful irony if we short-change the present opportunity? If this liberating, dynamic technology that can make so many things better, ends by creating more and even wider divides in this country going forward than we have had in the past? If the Internet, rather than opening doors of opportunity for all, becomes yet another province controlled by, and serving primarily, the elite and affluent while the rest fall even farther behind? If, instead of closing the divides—digital and otherwise—that this technology can so clearly help us close, we end up instead with more and wider divides between us?

So, going in, the first premise must be that we will no longer tolerate having digital divides between haves and have-nots, between those living in big cities and those living in rural areas or on tribal lands, between the able-bodied and persons with disabilities. We have the historic opportunity now to close many of these divides. Shame on us if we don't.

In Secretary of State Clinton's excellent and inspiring speech on Internet Freedom last week, she described the spread of information networks as the nervous system of our planet. It's a reality that unfolds more and more each day. When you think of how much the Internet has changed our daily lives in just the last five years, we know we can't even conceptualize how upcoming technology innovations and leaps will alter how we live 10 or 20 years hence.

If indeed we are going to fulfill this promise and lead the international community by example, then it is absolutely imperative that we maintain an Open Internet. We are right to worry about where the path will take us if we allow unreasonable discrimination on the Net. And we are right to be concerned that too much latitude in deciding what is reasonable is not a recipe for open networks. We cannot preach tolerance to nations around the world, while allowing those who provide the vital link to the online world to be intolerant. The Open Internet debate—so abysmally and unproductively named “Net Neutrality”—has produced strong reactions on both sides, to be sure. People feel passionately about these issues, but let me echo what Secretary Clinton said so eloquently, “On their own, new technologies do not take sides in the struggle for freedom and progress. But the United States does. We stand for a single Internet where all of humanity has equal access to knowledge and ideas. And we recognize that the world's information infrastructure will become what we and others make of it.”

Much of the answer here is, of course, broad pipes and adequate amounts of spectrum. So the first challenge is making that happen. There is no “reasonable management” of

America's current broadband inventory that can compensate for lack of capacity. Puny pipes are not going to carry America where it needs to go. So while we can all have interesting and hopefully productive discussions about how we manage the broadband that we currently have, let no one suppose that a truly Open Internet is primarily about management techniques. Rather, it's about having the vision to build networks that are as robust as our national needs. So this is, first and foremost, about building and providing capacity.

In other ways, too, I believe that our "Net Neutrality" dialogue has often been as narrow and constricted as dial-up Internet. "A solution in search of a problem," the Nay-sayers claim. But look around you. Don't you see the same signs of control over more and more of the major Internet sites by fewer and fewer big-time players, just as we saw with so much of traditional media? Don't we see the same kind of strategies to combine distribution and content? Can you tell me that minority and women voices on the Internet are getting through to major audiences—*really being heard*—like the big corporate sites? Compare the hits, compare the percentages of advertising dollars, compare how various sites fare on the search engines whose algorithms and who-knows-what-else determine where people are guided when they go looking for something. Take a look at Matthew Hindman's new book, *The Myth of the Digital Democracy*. You may not agree with it all, but read it and then tell me you come away from the experience confident that the Open Internet is nothing more than "a solution looking for a problem."

So I'll repeat right here what I have said many times in recent weeks. Anyone dedicated to making the Internet work for all of us—no matter who we are or what kind of power we wield—should be inside the Open Internet tent working to realize our shared dream.

This leads me to an absolutely critical dimension of broadband that I want to talk about today. It goes to how this great broadband infrastructure build-out is going to affect our national conversation, our civic dialogue, indeed, our democratic foundations. If our generation (yours at least!) is going to witness the movement of so much of our communications infrastructure to the Internet, what does that mean for us as a people and for America as a country? How do we make sure that what we're getting actually works for democracy? How do we ensure that this new medium will support the kind of news and information and diversity of thought that have kept our country going all these years? Surely no one wants to micro-manage a technology that thrives on constant innovation and dynamism. But at the end of the day, it has to serve the public interest.

Our democracy relies on a well-informed citizenry. Right now that means primarily traditional journalism, from newspapers and broadcasting because that's where 75% or more of the news we get still originates. More people are watching TV than ever and, as the Kaiser Family Foundation told us just last week, the average American kid is watching 4-1/2 hour hours of TV content each day, every day.

But everywhere around us are signs that the news and information journalism America relied on for so long is failing us today. The victims, just as much as all those out-of-work journalists, are you and me, because we are increasingly deprived of the news and information nourishment that feeds our decision-making and our democracy. Investigative journalism is, I think most observers agree, an endangered species. In a society where watchdog journalism is

absolutely essential, more than two dozen states don't have a single reporter accredited to cover Capitol Hill. At the state level, legions of lobbyists outnumber professional journalists by orders of magnitude.

At the end of last year, it is estimated that newspapers employed 20-25% fewer people than in 2001. What we missed because of this may not be quantifiable, but it's no less important for that. What are the stories that we didn't read, or see, or hear about? Who is to know what politicians or office-holders remain in place because the beat reporter who used to walk the corridors of power, building the necessary sources, digging through the files and doing the generally important work of holding up the fourth estate, is nowhere to be found? It's nice that every once in a while a corrupt individual will twitter about his misdeeds, but that's not enough for democracy to rely on, is it? So stories fall through journalism's gaps. I believe, I truly do, that enduring 5 or 10 years more of the present decline is not something America can afford.

If all goes well, the Internet will one day open wide avenues to support the kind of in-depth journalism I'm talking about. If all goes well, we will find platforms where diverse voices don't just talk, but where they actually have a shot at being *heard*. There's a lot of wonderful experimentation going on to devise successful models for Internet journalism. I hope these experiments blossom and multiply. But right now, what we have gained on the Internet does not match what we have already lost—lost through bad public and private decision-making regarding traditional media.

So we need a sharp focus here. It's about the future, yes—but it's about the present, too. We confront a two-pronged challenge. First, ensuring that the Internet of the future can support the information infrastructure which democracy requires; and, for the years immediately ahead, stemming the hemorrhage of traditional media journalism.

You can understand why I was so pleased last week when Chairman Genachowski issued a Public Notice "To Examine the Future of Media and Information Needs of Communities in a Digital Age." Its goal is to look at media—traditional and new media, and the future of journalism in this country, wherever that journalism resides—in the newspaper or broadcast newsroom or online. It is high time to really understand industry trends; business models; the mechanisms of support for investigative journalism; the public policy dimension; all the factors—private sector and public sector—that have brought us to the present state. And then to develop ideas for dealing with all of this.

So I hope no one here believes their job is over once the Commission issues its broadband plan on March 17. That plan will emphasize the importance of civic engagement and national purposes and hopefully will tee up some policy suggestions. But it will be the Public Notice on Media that will more fully inform this discussion and open the way for the kind of visionary public policy that the seriousness of the occasion compels.

These are tough issues to handle. But the challenge to build broad information infrastructure long predates broadband. It's actually a very old challenge. Thomas Jefferson, George Washington and James Madison put it front-and-center. We all remember that famous quote from Thomas Jefferson who, in talking about newspapers—which were the informational infrastructure of his day—said that, if given a choice, he would prefer to live in a country that

had newspapers and no government rather than one that had government with no newspapers. But that wasn't all he said. Robert McChesney and John Nichols, in their hugely informative and stimulating new book, *The Death and Life of American Journalism*, dug up the rest of what the great Mr. Jefferson had to say. Here's what Jefferson added: "But I should mean that every man should receive those papers, and be capable of reading them." Isn't that something? Jefferson is talking about **deployment**—getting that information infrastructure out to everyone. Sound familiar? And he's talking about **adoption**—making sure people know how to read those papers so they can use the information infrastructure to be good citizens for democracy.

Today our technology is new, but our democratic challenge is exactly the same. And that is why ubiquitous broadband, an Open Internet and robust journalism are issues of one piece as we forge new ways to talk with one another and to bind us together to for the next great chapter of America.

Thank you very much.