



# NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action. See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **STATEMENT BY FCC COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS ON THE PASSING OF DR. BENJAMIN L. HOOKS**

With the passing of Dr. Benjamin L. Hooks, the Federal Communications Commission and the country at large have lost a true trailblazer. Dr. Hooks – a lawyer, a Baptist minister, a civil rights leader, and a Presidential Medal of Freedom recipient – served as the FCC’s first African-American Commissioner from 1972 to 1977. Through his leadership, his conviction and his flair, he gave a voice to minorities and the poor. When he started at the FCC, not a single TV station in this country was owned by an African-American, and employment of minorities and women in broadcasting was at abysmally low levels. Dr. Hooks set out to change this, and change it he did. He was instrumental in providing opportunities to get broadcast licenses into the hand of minorities – including Howard University, which ran the first African-American-owned TV station – and in boosting minority employment in broadcasting from a meager 3 percent to 15 percent during his tenure. We need to re-commit ourselves to the work done by Dr. Hooks so many years ago – to endeavor for a robust, inclusive media landscape that truly reflects the rich cultural diversity of all our nation's citizens.

This past December, I had the privilege of joining Dr. Hooks at the National Civil Rights Museum in his hometown of Memphis. We were there for an FCC Field Hearing on Digital Inclusion. Dr. Hooks recognized broadband technology as “the great enabler of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.” He, more than anyone, understood the importance of access to full civic participation in our society. As we implement the National Broadband Plan, we should honor Dr. Hooks’ memory by ensuring equal opportunity in this Digital Age by bringing the benefits of enabling broadband technology and an open Internet to all Americans – no matter who they are, where they live, or the particular circumstances of their individual lives. As Dr. Hooks said in Memphis, “We can get there from here.”

Commissioner Hooks – just like Lawyer Hooks, Reverend Hooks and Executive Director Hooks – fought to change the reality of unequal opportunity in our communications industries. He did so through his unique combination of idealism and practicality. He made a difference on so many issues that came before the FCC, and for that we are grateful.

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