



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. Cir. 1974).

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STATEMENT BY FCC COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN ON THE PASSING OF THE HONORABLE BENJAMIN LAWSON HOOKS

With today's passing of the Honorable Benjamin Lawson Hooks, the world has lost a civil rights icon and I have lost an extraordinary role model for what it means to be a successful Commissioner and public servant.

One of the greatest honors of my young tenure as an FCC Commissioner was to personally witness this American hero's eloquent and powerful message, during a National Broadband Plan Workshop in Memphis, Tennessee this past December, about the ability of broadband service to lift up all people in the United States. He accepted the FCC's invitation to take part in an incredible evening event which attracted some 170 persons at the National Civil Rights Museum even though he was obviously weakened by his illness. But as millions already know, this was just one of the countless contributions that Dr. Hooks made to promoting the idea that communications services is a fundamental element for all Americans to fully enjoy the rights our Constitution promises and to share in the economic prosperity of our great Nation. Dr. Hooks served as an FCC Commissioner, from 1972 to 1977, and among the many contributions that Dr. Hooks made during his tenure at the FCC was that the employment of members of minority groups in the broadcast industry rose substantially.

For those who also place great value on public service, the life of Dr. Hooks will always be remembered as one dedicated to improving the lives of others and championing legal and economic justice. Before joining the FCC, Dr. Hooks served his country in the military, served as a public defender in Tennessee, worked with Justice Thurgood Marshall to develop legal strategies to end racial segregation and discrimination, worked in the broadcast industry, and served as a county criminal judge. After leaving the FCC in 1977, Dr. Hooks became the Executive Director of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and served in that post until 1992. Even after leaving the NAACP, Dr. Hooks continued to fight for increased diversity in the entertainment industry. This lifetime of service was properly recognized, in 2007, when Dr. Hooks received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, one of the highest civilian awards our federal government can bestow.

I first met Dr. Hooks in the Charleston, South Carolina Branch office of the NAACP in the late 80s. He and his beautiful wife asked me to further commit myself to the organization by accepting a volunteer post with ACT-SO (a year-round initiative "designed to recruit, stimulate,

improve and encourage high academic and cultural achievement among African American high school students”). And while I made a difficult decision by not accepting that worthwhile challenge, I know that if it were not for the path that Dr. Hooks’ laid during the course of his life and particularly in his service here at the FCC, I may not be here today.

Dr. Hooks paved the way for many “firsts”, and I intend to honor his legacy by doing my part to improve the access of all Americans to broadband and other communications services.

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