



NEWS

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See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS
APPLAUDS THE APPOINTMENT OF GEOFFREY BLACKWELL
TO LEAD NEW INITIATIVES FOR INDIAN COUNTRY

“I commend and applaud the Chairman’s decision to appoint Geoffrey Blackwell to lead the Commission’s new initiatives for Indian Country. As we work to ensure the deployment and adoption of broadband throughout this great land of ours, there has never been a more critical time for us to breathe new life into our trust relationship, working government-to-government, with Native Americans.

“The enabling power of broadband must leave no American behind—including the original Americans. I have seen first-hand the state of communications in Indian Country. We can, we must, do better. In so many places where Native Americans live, poverty endures, unemployment is at levels no society should tolerate, education languishes and even basic public safety falls far short of what people have a right to expect. Up-to-date, state-of-the-art communication facilities and services are still strangers across most of Indian Country. Even plain old telephone service—which so many of us take for granted—is at the shockingly low level of less than 70 percent household penetration on many of the tribal lands. And we don’t even begin to have reliable data on the status of Internet subscribership on tribal lands, because no one has bothered to collect it. Anecdotally, we know that broadband access on tribal lands is minimal—well below 10 percent. That’s not just unacceptable. It’s a national disgrace. Broadband is critical technology for the economic growth—perhaps even the survival—of these communities.

“The Chairman has charged Geoff with the essential task of implementing the National Broadband Plan’s recommendations for the deployment and adoption of broadband on tribal lands, including the establishment of an Office of Tribal Affairs. I am working hand-in-hand with the Chairman and my colleagues to make this a reality as quickly as possible.

“I have had the privilege of working closely with Geoff before, and believe his leadership will do much to restore a productive dialogue between the FCC and the sovereign tribal governments. I believe that the Chairman could have picked no better person to give the issues of Indian Country visibility and a deeper understanding here at the FCC.”

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