

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN ON THE PRESENTATION BY THE WORKING GROUP ON THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY ON THE INFORMATION NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES

Steve Waldman and his team are to be commended for the amount of time and energy that went into the production of this report. The issues covered fall into many categories: some new, some timely, some sad, and some scary. But the findings and recommendations contained in these 465 pages will hopefully begin conversations on new and innovative ideas for both improving and *saving* our existing media landscapes and platforms. I am hopeful that we all take advantage of this incredible opportunity to get a constructive dialogue going.

When I served for 14 years as the publisher and general manager of a small, weekly newspaper based in Charleston, South Carolina, I went out of my way to highlight the significant people, issues and positive topics of interest that were being ignored by the larger and better financed media outlets.

Times have changed, and there are very few people like the old Mignon around anymore. Media is, without argument, all around us. But for all its omnipresence, are the people I used to touch each week being better served? Quality local stories and reporting are precious avenues of knowledge for residents in small towns *and* in big cities, and today, despite all of these outlets, they are at risk.

This report explores the media landscape in detail, and I'm hoping it will shine a strong and urgent light on the state of local media. It touches on causes of and potential remedies of issues of grave concern, and all of us – not just the FCC but the media industry and everyone depended on it – need to consider them very seriously.

We must not stand idly by and watch the evaporation of our precious news outlets. "*We face not a broad crisis of 'the news' or 'content', but something much more specific: a shortage of local, professional accountability reporting,*" the language in the report states. "*This is likely to lead to more government waste, more local corruption, worse schools, a less-informed electorate, and even lives lost.*" The loss of 13,400 newsroom positions in just four years for years is attention grabbing and should move us to ask, what does this mean when it comes to the in-depth coverage of issues and local concerns when it comes to industry, government and our communities at-large?

Efforts such as creating state-based C-SPANs, targeting federal advertising spending to local news media, and helping nonprofit news operations to succeed are all possible positive steps towards improving local accountability of reporting.

Apart from local concerns, I am intrigued by many of the other findings in the report, from the coverage of regulatory agencies to services available to individuals with disabilities.

One of the more encouraging aspects is the section regarding modern media policy and historically underserved communities. It is essential to introduce as many people as possible to the vast opportunities that modern technology provides, and the requirement for TV stations to disclose whether their websites are accessible to the visually and hearing impaired, is something we should take very seriously.

Also, information about minority and female ownership helps us further debate the issues surrounding existing disparities, and I intend to take a deeper dive on this in the months to come. Additionally, attaining more accurate information about racial, ethnic and gender employment at broadcast stations is a must, and I look forward to more robust dialogue on that as well.

I am also pleased by the suggested focus on communications programs in historically black colleges. The idea of a Minority Capital Institute to help would-be entrepreneurs locate opportunities for financing is one idea that I look forward to discussing further.

Numerous recommendations toward making more data available online for public consumption are in line with the FCC's goal of greater efficiency and transparency. One of these proposals is to have television broadcasters file a streamlined, online form containing essential data as opposed to the current requirement of reporting on 365 days of programming. This would reduce the burden on broadcasters to file paper reports while also providing more transparency on important information for the public, and I look forward to working with broadcasters on this issue.

The more transparency there is in government, the more confident people can feel about what their government is doing for them. This report will hopefully pave the way to more discussions about what we can do to help make online filing easier and simpler, while still giving the public easy access to this important information.

I am eager to listen to and be part of the discussions that flow from the release of this report. It highlights very clearly that all of us have the capacity and opportunity in our personal and official capacities, to be influencers and change agents when it comes to the state of our media. I hope that the Commission will continue to find ways to work with private industry and local entities on many of the recommendations and concerns that the report highlights. I am confident that we can make meaningful strides toward improving our media landscape on the local level and filling the gaps between what worked so well in the past and what people are looking for in the present.

I want to again thank Steve Waldman and his team for their diligent work and for publishing a report that has the capacity to serve as an incredible conduit and opportunity enhanced community engagement. Well done.