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“INFORMATION NEEDS OF COMMUNITIES” FIELD EVENT  
WALTER CRONKITE SCHOOL OF JOURNALISM & MASS COMMUNICATION  
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Thank you, Dean Callahan for your kind introduction and for your outstanding leadership of the Cronkite School of Journalism and Mass Communication.

Thank you to the panelists who are here today, many of whom traveled great distances to be part of this important discussion. I’m particularly pleased to see so many young people in the audience who care about journalism and our democracy.

When I was about the age of the students here, I had the privilege of studying under and working for the great Fred Friendly. Fred had been President of CBS News, and before that was a producer for Edward R. Murrow and for Walter Cronkite. Fred Friendly has been gone for too many years, but I know he would be proud and moved that students every day learn about journalism at an institution named for Walter Cronkite, a powerful symbol of journalism and its vital role in our democracy.

I commend this school – and Dean Callahan – for being at the forefront of news innovation. The School has launched important programs such as its News21 initiative, which enables students to report on critical issues facing the state and the nation and uses innovative digital methods to distribute the news on multiple platforms. Cronkite School students now comprise the largest bureau covering the Arizona statehouse – and the only state bureau covering the federal government in Washington, DC.

I’d also like to thank Commissioner Michael Copps for being here today and for his commitment to these issues. Mike and I don’t always agree on the most effective role for government in media and journalism policy, but there’s no arguing over this: No one brings more passion, persistence or dedication to these important issues than Commissioner Mike Copps.

Almost two years ago, catalyzed by a report from a bipartisan Knight Commission, I asked Steve Waldman to lead a cross-agency team at the FCC to examine the information needs of communities in the digital age.

The communications landscape has changed dramatically with the entry and widespread use of broadband – on computers, on smartphones, on tablets. We asked: what's the state of play, and are there recommendations for how to ensure that communities in the 21st century have the news and information they need and want?

I’m pleased that, thanks to Steve Waldman and a remarkable team at the FCC, the Commission released an in-depth and thoughtful report this past June on the information needs of communities in the broadband age.

On behalf of Steve and the team, I’m especially proud that the report has drawn praise from a wide range of sources, including a long list of journalism school deans (thank you, Dean Callahan). In addition, experts from across the spectrum of viewpoints – leaders

from the academy, from business, and from consumer groups – praised its thorough, fair-minded and lucid analysis.

And even better, this report has sparked discussion and has already spurred action among stakeholders throughout this ecosystem.

I'll speak more about that in a minute.

But first, I'd like to briefly highlight three reasons why I think this report is so important.

First, it describes how new technology is creating a new world of opportunity to empower journalists and citizens, and to keep the public informed like never before.

Much is going well when it comes to the Internet and journalism. Digital innovations have made the gathering and distribution of news and information faster, less expensive and more democratic. One example: Digital innovations have opened up new opportunities for tribal communities to preserve and share their culture and history in ways never before possible. In our nation's history, we have never had a greater opportunity to realize our founding vision of a vibrant democracy bolstered by a strong free press and informed citizens.

So the first contribution of the report is its focus on the opportunities of new technologies.

The second is its focus on the challenges.

Foremost is the disruptive impact the Internet and economic pressures have had on local news-gathering. This report describes compellingly the deficits in the media system – most especially an emerging gap in local news reporting that has not yet been fully filled by digital media. This matters tremendously. If citizens don't get local news and information, the health of our democracy suffers. The less quality local reporting we have, the less likely we are to learn about problems and misdeeds, whether they are schools that fail children, hospitals that mistreat patients, or factories that pollute the water.

But the report did not just stop at describing problems. It suggests thoughtful and practical initiatives that help address the challenges it identifies. It does so recognizing the essential constraints of the First Amendment, particularly vital in this area of news and information.

And indeed, many of the suggestions are for non-governmental actors – a strength of the report. As Steve has put it, government is “not the main player in this drama.”

To be sure, there are important areas where government can make a positive difference. And Steve and his team developed a creative set of recommendations for government, the private sector and nonprofits that can help make success possible for the journalists and entrepreneurs that are trying to seize the opportunities of the digital revolution.

At the FCC, we've recently implemented one of the report's recommendations – purging the Fairness Doctrine from our books. In addition, I've asked the Media Bureau to move ahead with the recommendation to give religious and other noncommercial broadcasters

more flexibility to raise money for charities in their communities or around the world. And I've asked the Media Bureau to develop and move forward on a plan to advance the report's principles related to disclosure.

In this Internet age, of course the public information in the "public file" kept by broadcasters should be online, not in filing cabinets. And as we've heard from thoughtful leaders in both the broadcasting and public interest communities, there should be a streamlined and non-burdensome online mechanism for broadcasters to disclose key information about their service to their communities.

As I mentioned, the report has stimulated action among outside stakeholders. I'm delighted to hear Dean Callahan's announcement about the new initiative by many of the nation's top journalism schools. Funded by the Knight Foundation, this initiative will carry forward the issues raised in this report.

Other groups are announcing constructive steps as well. The Council on Foundations is moving ahead with an effort to make detailed recommendations to the IRS about potential tax changes to remove obstacles to nonprofit media innovation. A significant group of newspapers, local broadcasters, and web-based news providers have all endorsed the report's suggestion that the federal government target a greater portion of its existing advertising spending toward local media. And Carolina Academic Press has decided to publish the report as a book to help get it wider circulation.

I'm looking forward to hearing from representatives of media companies and public interest groups today. While they may differ on some of the details, they have come to support the basic framework for broadcaster transparency, as I've indicated. This is a significant development. I want to applaud both the leading broadcasters represented here and the public interest groups for your constructive and positive approach to this topic. I believe this will benefit American communities and the broadcasters that serve them.

Finally, we continue to make strides on a fundamental recommendation of the report – achieving universal broadband access for all Americans.

The report has no more important recommendation. The principle of universal access to information, and the recognition of its necessity, goes back to the early years of our republic, and has been a constant throughout our history. In 1832, newspapers accounted for 95% of the weight carried by the Postal Service, and those newspapers received a discount for postage. The primary news delivery mechanisms of the 20th century – newspapers, radio, and TV – were all universal. The emerging news delivery mechanism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – broadband Internet – of course must be too.

Ubiquitous broadband – wired and wireless – is an economic imperative for the United States. Our broadband economy is a bright spot in these challenging economic times. The broadband economy is growing and creating jobs. It is helping not only new businesses grow and compete, but also empowering existing businesses to expand their markets on new platforms.

That's true of existing news and media businesses as well, more and more of which are innovating on new platforms, seeking to reach their audiences however they are choosing to read, watch or interact.

And the larger the online and mobile broadband markets, the more of a return on investment news companies can achieve.

Ubiquitous broadband is essential not only for a healthy economy, but for a healthy democracy. As recent events overseas have powerfully confirmed, real-time, two-way interactive communications are essential in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to the fundamental rights of expression and assembly, and essential to an informed citizenry.

There's much we have to do to achieve universal and ubiquitous broadband.

We must unleash more spectrum for mobile broadband, helping drive continued growth in a thriving part of our economy, and helping avoid consumer frustration over dropped connections and higher prices.

And we must close the broadband deployment and adoption gaps in the U.S. Right now, about 20 million Americans live in areas without broadband infrastructure, and 100 million Americans don't subscribe to broadband at home.

At the FCC we're in the homestretch of our effort to modernize the Universal Service Fund, the program that ensured affordable telephone access for every American in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but that now needs to be transformed for a broadband world.

Improving broadband infrastructure and increasing broadband access will drive our overall economy, and will help inform and educate everyone in our country. Increasing broadband access will provide specific benefits to news entrepreneurs and businesses seeking to make the math work in these challenging and changing times.

Getting to 100 percent broadband adoption from today's level would represent a 50 percent increase in the online audience in the United States. The larger the online market, the greater the scale – and the more likely a news and information business can succeed online.

The bottom line: Thanks to Steve Waldman and his team, the FCC has issued a thorough and thoughtful report that deepens our understanding of how technology is affecting the information needs of our communities – a roadmap and a set of practical and First Amendment-friendly recommendations that fill real gaps and improve the news and information landscape.

I also thank Bill Lake for his leadership of the Media Bureau and the excellent staff of the Bureau, not only for the excellent assistance they provided in the development of the report, but for the work they are doing and will continue to do to move forward on its recommendations.

It is my privilege now to turn it over to Steve Waldman and Bill Lake. I look forward to this morning's panels.