

**Prepared Remarks of FCC Commissioner Mignon L. Clyburn**  
**FCC Forum: Information Needs of Atlanta**  
**Georgia Institute of Technology**  
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I am extremely pleased to join all of you today, but I am especially ecstatic about the opportunity to get outside of D.C., back into the Deep South, and nearer to where I call home. While the FCC is an incredible place to work and make a real difference for all Americans, engagements like these allow public servants an opportunity to see the impact of their decisions. I am especially grateful for the support of Congressman John Lewis and his commitment to address these critical communications issues.

The issues we tee up today are of paramount importance to us, your community and to our future. Atlanta's information needs may differ from where I call home, but we all stand to benefit from the sharing of innovative ideas, opportunities and solutions, and from learning more about the unique challenges found by entrepreneurs, reporters, bloggers, station owners, and the creative and dedicated citizens in this room. Today they may be faced with many barriers, but there also exists incredible opportunities for communities to access information. Technology is advancing at a rapid pace, and as regulators, we find often ourselves struggling to adjust and adapt. Today's smartphones will soon be mocked as tomorrow's "dumbphones," long before we acquaint ourselves with all of the menu options and applications in those devices. And let us not forget that these rapid advances present ongoing challenges for those of us committed to closing the digital divide—which is actually growing because that technological goal post is constantly moving down the field.

So what does that last point have to do with today's focus? Innovation is affecting the way media stations report and how we, as individuals, consume information. As the FCC's Future of Media report states, the news and information landscape, fueled primarily by broadband-enabled innovation, is more vibrant than ever before. Digital technology is creating a world of opportunity to keep the public informed in ways that were unimaginable just a few short years ago. The report further notes that breakthroughs in "hyper-local" news and citizen journalism are on the rise, empowering individuals with a wealth of new information. That information can serve to better inform decision-making and engender a more accountable local and federal government. But many in those communities are now grappling with a situation where they feel that they have more access to information, but get less news, and that there is a threat of information over-load, but not as much practical engagement.

Even though the Internet and mobile devices have opened up new opportunities for consumption, recent statistics show that 74% of Americans turn to broadcast TV more frequently than any other source for local news. Local news broadcasts continue to be the go-to source of weather information. It's where people go for the latest news on the investigation into the local school board or city council. It is where people go to learn how recent heavy rains have affected roads and businesses.

The fact remains that local news providers serve a vital role in our communities. Local newspapers, which are close to my heart, play a significant and intimate role, too, often offering in-depth investigative reporting and updates that are unique to their readers. As community members, local reporters often understand local history and can engage in community dialogues that happen within our important community institutions. They have the ability to show us the good things happening just outside our door, whether they are covering volunteer activities,

charity events, local sports, or other positive news stories about our friends, neighbors, and co-workers, but are they performing these functions?

Is the breadth and quality of local news broadcasts and printed stories not what it used to be due to the evaporation of many of their traditional sources of revenue? Are reporters becoming increasingly isolated from the communities they are assigned to cover, paid increasingly lower wages, or are they writing only a fraction of the content that they used to produce? What is the community impact of those massive reporter lay offs? Many smaller and even some larger newspapers and radio stations are extremely strapped for cash, so in order for them to survive, should they be combined or be absorbed into by larger and healthier conglomerates? And if so, would that in reality remove an independent voice from the airwaves or newsstands?

And are there enough diverse voices at these properties and in news content on the whole? And when I say diverse, I mean gender as well. The sad truth is that data on minority and female ownership and management of TV and radio stations is slim and until we have a handle on the specifics of the state of minority and female ownership and management, few concrete conclusions can be drawn and few solutions, even if they are warranted, can be instituted.

You have made great sacrifices to be here this evening, so thank you again for joining us. Your interest in community media needs is what fuels *my* interest, and for that I am grateful. Let's have a great discussion.