

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ROBERT M. MCDOWELL
ON THE RETIREMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2011**

(AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY)

I have been in denial about this day for quite some time. I dislike farewells and I'm not very good at them because I tend to get emotional. In fact, just the other day, we had to say goodbye to the McDowell family's only pet, "Lucky" the sea monkey, and I started to tear up. So you can understand how difficult it is for me to say, not farewell, but "see you later" to my friend and distinguished colleague of the past five-and-a-half years, Mike Copps. So I'll try to keep this light hearted and dry eyed, but I can't make any guarantees.

Unlike Lucky, Mike has quite a backbone. He is, without a doubt, my favorite principled liberal. I first met Mike when I was in the private sector shortly after he became a commissioner in 2001. His reputation as an erudite intellectual with a deep and broad career in public service preceded his arrival here. Before meeting him, in all honesty, I was a bit intimidated. He quickly put me at ease, however, with his straightforward, thoughtful and genteel manner. Little did I know in 2001 that someday we would become colleagues and friends.

We are not an obvious pair for friendship. I'm a Republican, and he is a Democrat. I believe in market solutions; he believes in government solutions. And perhaps the widest chasm for us to bridge: I am a Blue Devil, and he is a Tar Heel. Nonetheless, fate threw us together. If Neil Simon were to write a play about us, it would surely be called *The Odd Couple*. But unlike Oscar and Felix, we did not drive each other crazy. Quite the opposite. We worked *together* more than most FCC observers probably realize. Sometimes we took different philosophical

paths but arrived at the same destination, such as with the contentious issue that faced me before I was even sworn in: multi-cast must-carry. We both declined to support it, but for different reasons.

That type of scenario unfolded frequently. In fact, a while ago, I asked my law clerks to analyze my voting record versus the three chairmen with whom I have served. Counting concurrences, I voted with Chairman Martin 97 percent of the time. The last time I checked, I voted with Chairman Genachowski 95 percent of the time. And during Mike Copps' six month tenure as Chairman? We voted together ... *100 percent* of time. That's right, during the era of the "Three Amigos" under the leadership of Chairman Copps, all 50 votes that he, Jonathan Adelstein and I cast, were *unanimous*. So if I've accomplished one thing today, it is to ruin both of our reputations within our respective constituencies.

But in all seriousness, we always knew that Mike Copps had a countercultural streak. When it came time for him to display his leadership abilities with his hand on the tiller of this agency, however, it ended up that his style ran counter to the partisan culture of Washington. Such a perfect bipartisan legacy is virtually unheard of these days.

By the way, I always hesitated to call him "*Acting* Chairman." Remember: He isn't an actor; he's a "rock star." Plus, a mere Acting Chairman could not have brought in for a smooth landing the one task that required the FCC to affect more Americans than any other in decades: the digital television transition. Success was by no means guaranteed. Yet Chairman Copps' inclusiveness brought together a diverse coalition of coalitions that spanned literally from sea to shining sea to make the DTV transition a sparkling success. I will always be grateful to him for accomplishing that Herculean task a mere four days before my Senate reconfirmation hearing!

And let us always remember that his adroit handling of the DTV transition garnered him Fox News Sunday's coveted "Power Player of the Week" award. Many folks found that deliciously ironic. Did MSNBC do that for you?

I always look forward to my meetings with Mike. He frequently starts our conversations talking about his family. He is quite obviously a loving husband to his beautiful bride, Beth, a proud father to five children: Bobby, Betsy, Michael, Will and Claire - and a very busy and adoring grandfather tending to his six grandchildren.

During our meetings, not only did he always make me think, but we had fun as well. He uttered some of his best one-liners, from his bottomless satchel of humor, during our one-on-ones. Fortunately for the two of us, but unfortunately for everyone else, they will remain forever off the record.

Even though we sometimes disagreed on policy, I admire his talent in expressing his views so memorably. Who else could have framed our December 2007 media ownership decision as "another big, shiny present for the favored few who already hold an FCC license – and a lump of coal" for everyone else? And he once again stole the show when delivering his statement on the Comcast/BitTorrent matter when he said that the FCC needed to "make clear that the Commission is not having a one-night stand with net neutrality, but an affair of the heart and a commitment for life." Who can't help but admire his eloquence?

His accomplishments are numerous and profound, and I suspect he is merely in mid-stride in his quest to quench his desire for public service. I hope that is the case. For in Washington, there are only three types of policymakers. Too numerous are the unprincipled politicians who will say and do anything to stay in office. Far fewer are the dedicated and

diligent public servants who devote their lives to serving their fellow citizens. And then, each generation yields only a few whose vision, honesty, sincerity and passion truly make them *e pluribus unum* – one out of many. These individuals are known as “statesmen.” Ladies and gentlemen, Michael J. Copps is a statesman.

Thank you for your service to your country, my friend. I look forward to a lot more.