

REMARKS OF
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MMTC HONORS FCC COMMISSIONER MICHAEL COPPS
NATIONAL CABLE & TELECOMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION
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[AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY]

We all owe many thanks to MMTC for putting together this terrific event honoring my colleague for five and a half years, Mike Copps. David has warned us that our time to speak has been capped at three minutes. I welcome that restriction because it gives me less of an opportunity to choke up like I did in December. Because I may have been hard to understand then, it's good to get a "re-do."

But first, on a more serious note, I'd like to thank this distinguished public servant for being such a thoughtful and caring steward of his public office. I don't mean his position as Commissioner; I mean his physical office – the suite I now occupy. You left it in terrific shape. Thank you. And just so you know, your "Roosevelt Room" is still the Roosevelt Room, albeit with pictures of Teddy on the walls.

I first met Mike when I was in the private sector shortly after he became a commissioner in 2001. Before meeting him, in all honesty, I was a bit intimidated. His reputation as an erudite intellectual with a deep and broad career in public service preceded his arrival here. 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.

At first glance, 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. Although we sometimes took different philosophical paths, on several occasions we arrived at the same destination and worked *together* more than most FCC observers probably realize. When it came time for Mike to display his leadership abilities with his hand on the tiller of the FCC as Chairman in 2009, however, it ended up that his style ran counter to the partisan culture of Washington. In fact, during Mike Copps' six-month tenure as Chairman, he and I voted together ... *100 percent* of time ... ruining both of our reputations within our respective constituencies. 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 successfully accomplished the one task that required the FCC to touch the lives of more Americans than any other in decades: the digital television transition. 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. I don't think MSNBC did that for you.

All of us at the Commission already miss his eloquence and humor. While sometimes I disagreed with the substance of his votes, I always admired his mastery of the English language. For instance, he 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.”

His accomplishments are numerous and profound, and I suspect his board positions with Common Cause and Public Knowledge, plus what I’m sure will be many future endeavors, will only whet his appetite for more public service. I expect no less, as Mike is a dedicated and diligent American devoted to serving his fellow citizens. I look forward to working with my distinguished friend . . . as soon as the ethics rules allow. In the meantime, MMTC is wise to honor him today and I offer my sincere congratulations.