

**FAREWELL REMARKS OF COMMISSIONER ROBERT M. McDOWELL
TO THE STAFF OF
THE FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION**

[As Prepared for Delivery]

April 18, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. First, our hearts and prayers should go out to the victims of the horrible events in Boston and Texas. As always, the FCC will do its relevant part. But during today's events and beyond, let's keep the victims in mind.

And to Chairman Genachowski: All of us thank you and your family for the sacrifices and contributions you have made these past four years in the service of your country. It has been a pleasure and an honor to have served with you. I know you will be tremendously successful in your future endeavors.

When it comes to farewell remarks, it is important to be brief. It is important for remarks to be heartfelt too, but being brief takes priority. So I will try my best. Besides, I fully understand that you really came for the refreshments and to hear the FCC band.

During my life, I have been blessed more than I deserve. Today is a day to count some of these blessings and to be thankful. First and foremost, I have been blessed with an amazing family. I had incredibly generous and loving parents, and doting older siblings. In fact, my favorite sister, Tina, is making a rare public appearance here today. Well, she is also my only sister and, when she was eight, she used to change my diapers. Also here today are the four people without whom I could not survive – my beautiful and patient bride, Jennifer, and our three amazing children: Griffin, Mary-Shea and Cormac. Without their love and support I simply couldn't function. I will always be indebted to them. Thank you!

I have also been blessed by the opportunity to serve in this incredibly magical job. As you know, I have loved every second of my time here and it is hard for me to leave. I have loved it in large part because I have been so lucky to have worked with the finest public servants – that would be each of you.

It may sound trite, but it's true: Your mission at the FCC is noble. What you do touches the lives of every American, and millions more across the globe, every day. In fact, what you do not only touches lives, but sometimes it helps *save* lives. On top of that, as I said during my first Senate confirmation hearing more than seven years ago, at its core our work at the FCC should be about human freedom – the freedom to communicate.

So tomorrow morning when you hit the snooze button on your alarm clocks, or when you're fighting traffic to get to the Portals, please remind yourself of that sense of mission. It may not always be obvious, but what you do here shapes the trajectory of the human condition. Sometimes it takes years or decades for your work to come to fruition, but never let that overshadow the *enormous* effect of your blood, sweat, toil and tears. Thank you for your service

and sacrifice. And that goes to *absolutely everyone* at the Commission I have worked with since I began.

Other blessings include the incredibly talented people who have worked in my office over these past seven years. I'm delighted, and I have to say surprised and proud, that my office enjoyed very low turnover during my tenure, so the list is mercifully short.

On my first day, June 1, 2006, right after being sworn in, I realized that I knew *nothing* about almost *everything* at the FCC. But there, waiting to help me in my new office suite was Rafael Fernandez. (By the way, the suite contained a bathroom larger than my private sector office). Rafael is all that stood between me and total chaos, and I will always be grateful to him for ensuring my new office got up and running. And by the way, Jerry Duvall swears that Rafael is one of the greatest bass guitarists of all time. You can judge for yourself in a few minutes. I also see Dana Shaffer helping today. She was on loan from Chairman Martin's office in the early days to help me set up as well. Thank you, Dana.

Not long after came Cristina Pauze, whose grace, intelligence, insight and unflappable nature became indispensable to me through the many, many tense and turbulent media policy debates in those early days.

At the same time, along came Angela Giancarlo who quickly started filling my empty head regarding all things wireless – and a lot more. Her wisdom and leadership skills were crucial for years thereafter.

Later, I had a rare opportunity to recruit a long-time friend, John Hunter. John's great depth, breadth, experience and advice helped me better navigate, and help reform, the Commission's byzantine telecom rules.

In the ensuing years, I had the tremendous good fortune of benefiting from Nick Alexander's razor sharp legal mind and sound judgment. It was also good to have a former Army rifle platoon leader in our midst. Let's just say, I'm glad he's on *our* side!

Eventually, good luck came my way yet again when – somehow – I was able to convince Rosemary Harold to sign up for a tour of duty. Her stellar analytical mind and voluminous institutional memory of media policy were indispensable in many crucial matters, not the least of which was the historic digital television transition.

I am also grateful for some charitable and talented pinch hitters: Toni McGowan and Marquita Boozer. When I needed them most, they performed crucial roles to fill gaps in our line due to maternity leaves. The office would have unraveled long ago without them.

And now I come to the women, some of the "Iron Ladies," who stayed behind until the very end to turn out the lights in our office, which actually won't happen for a couple of weeks. They haven't had the benefit of a good-bye send-off as have the other alumni, so I may say a few extra words about them.

Tasha Kinney has proven to be a rare and lucky find. Her diligence, thoughtfulness and diplomatic manner are surpassed only by her sunny disposition. I'm delighted that she has served as the first person people see when they call on the McDowell office. She always gets

rave reviews. She filled in terrifically when Brigid was on maternity leave, and that's saying more than you know. She has represented all of us well and I have been honored to have worked with her.

Erin McGrath came to my office as one of the most experienced, talented and knowledgeable communications transaction attorneys anywhere. There was no angle or detail of a deal that escaped her unsurpassed intellect and powers of observation. She proved outrageously versatile when I asked – scratch that – *begged* her to make a major pivot in her career and sign on as my legal advisor for media policy. She probably thought I was crazy, but she must have felt sorry for me and signed up anyway. As expected, I benefitted from her innate abilities as a quick study and keen analyst and advisor. Without missing a beat, she became a leader within the Commission on the most important media issues of the day. I will always be grateful to her as well.

When the position for the wireline advisor opened up in 2009, I never could have dreamed that Christine Kurth would say “yes” to my offer to take it. In fact, I had convinced myself that after serving as the Republican Staff Director of the Senate Commerce Committee as well as counsel to the Senate Appropriations Committee, and many other prominent roles on Capitol Hill, plus having a key hand in getting me this job to begin with, that I shouldn't even bother asking her. But eventually, I summoned up the courage and called her. The conversation started with me apologizing for wasting her time. She asked me what was involved with the job and I said, “Oh, not much. It'll be easy.” Then, I accidentally blurted out that all she really had to do was reform universal service. I could have kicked myself! She said she'd think about it, which I was sure really meant “no way!” But a few days later she called back and said “yes!” The rest is, quite literally, history. Without Christine's deep knowledge of the intricacies of universal service, the first bipartisan reform of a federal entitlement program in a generation may never have happened. And I mean that in the most literal of ways and without exaggeration. Now she knows I wasn't kidding when I begged her in that first phone call to fix universal service.

And last, but very far from least, is Brigid Kathleen Nealon Calamis. First, proving that she has more common sense than the rest of us put together, Brigid is not here today. Instead of attending this event, she is likely interviewing for a job. But that won't stop me from talking about her. Anyone who has worked with Brigid knows that she is the linchpin of the office; the glue; the “fixer;” the confidant for *all* of us; the universal translator (for you *Star Trek* fans); the consummate diplomat; the “Radar O'Reilly” who anticipates almost everything long before the rest of us; she's the truly versatile utility player who belongs in a hall of fame; the Coach K (I said that just to annoy her); and the quiet, sensible and steady hand. Brigid moves like silk through some of the most difficult situations. She also wins the award for having served with me the longest – since *before* I arrived at the Commission. So clearly she is charitable and patient. But for Brigid, I would have made many, many more mistakes than I did. And those that I did make, were over her objections. As my Deputy Chief of Staff, she was involved in nearly every major matter that came across my desk. I am delighted to report to the American taxpayers that they received an incredible bargain through Brigid's public service.

These good people had the thankless job of rolling a big rock uphill every day as they tried valiantly to make me look good. Therefore, each is a champion of a lost cause. So please give them a big hand as thanks for their service.

And so now it is time to wrap this up. Saying thank you to each and every one of you is horribly insufficient, but it is all that I'm left with. The Chairman and I are going from having 1600 of some of the most talented public servants in the world at our disposal, to searching for a space for our laptops on our dining room tables. It has been said that a cold dose of humility is good for the soul. He and I are about to find out.

I didn't know how to end this, in case you couldn't tell. And then I found a quote from one of the greatest writers produced by Ireland, George Bernard Shaw. But then I hesitated, because it ends up he was a socialist. But this excerpt has nothing to do with that. Then, as I thought more about his quote, I felt it was missing a few things. Being the son of two editors, I felt the need to tweak his prose. How's that for hubris? – rewriting Shaw. Nonetheless, here is some combination of George Bernard Shaw and ... well, me.

Life is no brief candle! It is a splendid torch which we've got hold of only for a moment. All of us should want to make it burn as brightly as possible before handing it to future generations. This is the true joy in life, being used for a mighty purpose greater than yourself, such as serving your fellow Americans, then being thoroughly burned out before you are thrown on the scrap heap.

Now, I am by no means burned out, and I am hardly ready for a scrap heap. Many more mighty purposes lie ahead. But as we part ways today, keep in mind the image of that torch – yes, the torch of life, but also the torch of *liberty*. As you work on your noble mission here, always – *always* – remember to stand strong for freedom.

Thank you, and may God bless each of you and the United States of America.