

**Remarks of FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler
As Prepared for Delivery
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Thank you Pastor Edmonds for that introduction. Congratulations to Makani Themba and Commissioner Cathy Sandoval for your well-deserved recognition.

It is an honor to follow Reverend Truman Parker – following a Parker is natural for all of us, and that, in part, is what I'd like to address today.

There are multiple reasons why it is a privilege to be here, but I want to highlight two.

First, I grew up in a UCC church. The church is one that in its own words “joins faith with action.” This call to action challenges us to search for social justice. Everett Parker took that challenge to the parochial corners of telecommunications policy.

Secondly, I knew Everett Parker. Not well, but in the late 1970s we both advocated for diversity of voices in media. I was doing it for the cable television industry, which had an obvious interest in overcoming the restrictive rules imposed by the FCC. Rev. Parker did it because diversity of choice and diversity of opportunity was what he was all about.

Today we celebrate Rev. Everett Parker's service to God and his contribution to our society. When he appealed the FCC's 1965 decision to grant WLBT's license renewal in *United Church of Christ v. FCC*, he not only took on racism, but also he established the landmark precedent that gave ordinary citizens the right, for the first time, to participate in FCC proceedings.

The fact that today all FCC processes are open and that anyone can provide comments on the topics we discuss is a tremendous legacy that we too often take for granted.

Before this decision, the FCC's position was that only those alleging “economic injury and electrical interference” had the right to challenge its licensing decisions

But Chief Judge, and soon-to-be Chief Justice, Warren Burger wrote a powerful opinion that said that the public played an important role as “private attorneys general” in helping the FCC enforce the public interest standard.

I have often said that the networks that connect us are the forces that define us – not just our commerce, but also our culture and individual lives. Everett Parker gave us all a voice in the policy related to that defining force.

At the FCC we are the public's representative in this communications revolution. Fighting for the public interest as technology transforms our economy and society is the FCC's Number One job responsibility.

And we've got our work cut out for us.

At the time of Reverend Parker's campaign, broadcast TV and radio were by far and away the most powerful sources for news and information. Fifty years after Everett Parker filed the petition that would transform access to broadcasting there is a new platform that is redefining not

only access to news and information, but also access to economic opportunity and growth. Of course, I'm talking about the Internet.

Ensuring universal access to the Internet for all will not be an easy task. Nearly 30% of Americans are not connected to high-speed broadband Internet at home. This includes nearly 14 million Americans that have no access whatsoever.

Low-income individuals and people of color are disproportionately offline, and they are unconnected for a variety of reasons: cost, a dearth of relevant content, lack of digital literacy, or a mixture of the above.

The costs of digital exclusion are significant for the non-connected and for our nation.

Broadband is the gateway that facilitates, among other things, online learning, telework, remote health care monitoring, social networking, news and entertainment programming and economic opportunities. Like access to broadcasting in the 1960's, access to the broadband Internet is critical to full and fair participation in our society and our economy.

In 2014, opportunity for all requires broadband for all.

So what should we be doing to advance the public interest and ensure that all Americans are enjoying the benefits of high-speed broadband?

Let me answer that question of what we should do by telling you some of the things I believe, and how the Commission is acting on those beliefs.

First, I believe that advancing the public interest starts with facilitating dynamic technological change to ensure the U.S. has world-class communications networks.

As many of you know, I'm a student of history. One lesson is that the opportunities created by new networks are always met with resistance. Some resistance comes from economic incumbents threatened. Some of the resistance stems from human nature. Let's be honest; change is hard. And it's fair to say that broadband Internet – wired and wireless – is a disruptive force that's changing almost every aspect of our economy and our society.

But history also tells us that those who embrace change are the ones who write the future.

We need to facilitate change by promoting the world's best innovation infrastructure. We need faster, affordable networks in more places. I don't know about you, but I'm tired of seeing the charts of where the U.S. ranks in comparison to the broadband speeds of other nations. Table stakes for the 21st century is 25 Mbps, and winning the game means that all consumers can get at least 100 Mbps – and more.

At a time when technological advances are moving at lightning speed, competition that forces companies to embrace those advances is the best way to achieve those goals. Unfortunately, today there is an inverse relationship between competition and broadband speed. Three-quarters of American homes have no competitive choice at 25 Mbps. That includes almost 20 percent who have no option at all at those speeds!

To address this gap, I outlined an Agenda for Broadband Competition, which states that where competition exists, the Commission will protect it. Where greater competition can exist, we will

incent it. And where competition cannot exist, we will take on the responsibility of promoting broadband deployment.

When we talk about broadband, we are increasingly talking about mobile connectivity. And as the Pew Research Internet Project has found, people of limited economic means and people of color disproportionately rely on mobile phones for broadband Internet access. The 21st century will be defined by the networks that marry the ever-increasing computing power of Moore's Law with the invisible delivery of wireless spectrum. That's why the FCC is pursuing a comprehensive agenda to make more spectrum available for broadband, including for small businesses and minority entrepreneurs.

Embracing the future also means focusing on the opportunities created by our new network realities, rather than simply refighting the struggles of the past.

Case in point: look at media ownership. This was at the center of Everett Parker's fight 50 years ago, and it's still an important issue today. As many of you know, in recent years, we saw covert consolidation in the broadcast television industry as major corporations used so-called sidecar agreements to do an end-run around the FCC's media ownership limits. The result was a reduction in the number of ownership opportunities for women and minorities. In March, the FCC cracked down on these sidecar deals. I'm pleased that as a result of these new rules, new opportunities are being opened for minority and women ownership. When Gray Television, for instance, was unable to gain our approval to continue the old ways, they sold six full-power TV stations to new minority and female owners.

That's great news, but the reality is that – thanks to new broadband technologies – facilities ownership is less critical to diverse voices than ever before. Yes, we will continue to push for diversity in ownership. But, just as important in the Internet Age, we need to exploit our new networks for ownership diversity and content diversity.

So I believe we need to embrace and facilitate the changes made possible by broadband revolution, which brings me to my second point.

While network technologies have changed, the principles that define the relationship between those who build and own our communications networks and those who use them have not. Advancing the public interest requires ensuring that our networks reflect our civic values.

At the beginning of my term, I spoke about the Network Compact, those immutable values that have formed the foundation of our communications networks for over a century. These principles include:

- Access – both to networks and on networks,
- Interconnection – by definition a network is a series of connections; in the broadband world, the Internet isn't a thing, but a connected collection of networks,
- Consumer protection – technology has pushed the laws of physics, but nothing has changed the laws of human nature or economics, and consumers must be protected from exploitation,
- Public safety –without a doubt, this must be the underlying deliverable of all networks, and
- National security – in a world in which networks are now attack vectors, we must have secure and safe connectivity.

Telephone companies are retiring their old networks – which primarily run over copper -- and are moving to internet protocol or “IP” networks that use a variety of means of transmission, including fiber and wireless. This transition raises a multitude of questions: What obligations will attach in an all-IP environment? Will 911 calls be required to go through with the same reliability as old landline networks? Will carriers be responsible to serve the remotest areas or the poorest populations? What about disability access and protections against privacy violations and fraudulent billing?

There are those who argue that the move from analog networks to IP networks changes the principles of the Network Compact. They are wrong. The form these responsibilities take may change in an IP world, but the principles do not – and should never – go away.

While our principles remain constant in the face of change, our policies to protect those principles cannot. I believe that to serve the public interest government oversight must evolve to reflect changes in technology.

Which brings us back to Rev. Parker. In the last half of the last century he fought for the public interest in the then-dominant communications technology. Today, at the beginning of the 21st century, we must transition his fight to the new communications technology.

The fight for the diversity of viewpoints and the protection of fundamental democratic values has leapt to the Internet. The opportunity the Internet offers for making everyone a publisher with their own outlet to the world – literally the world – is the greatest advance in democratic values in history. But it only works if the Internet remains open.

Everett Parker’s fight began when a Mississippi television station chose to go dark rather than broadcast information about racial justice. Rev. Parker fought to see that there were consequences to that activity and that the people’s airwaves were not manipulated in such a manner.

Today our challenge is to ensure that the Internet remains open to new ideas, new people expressing themselves, and new economic opportunity.

The history of networks – whether the railroad, telegraph, or telephone – has been one where the incredible opportunity presented to society is tempered by the reality of economic opportunism.

Everett Parker fought for the free flow of information without economic obstruction. In his time it was necessary to own a broadcast license or buy ink in 50-gallon barrels for your newspaper in order to have a conduit for widespread expression. Today you just need an Internet connection. That connection must be able to lead you and your opinions to the world, as well as bring the thoughts and ideas of the world to you – both without interference.

Free expression is the basis on which our democracy is constructed. We have learned that financial interests can under-value the importance of speech. But we will not. We will recognize the importance of the speaker. Just as importantly, we will recognize the importance of the listener to receive information. Democracy cannot work if political expression is cabined and confined. The history of America is the history of unpopular ideas that came to be recognized as essential truths – from the independence of colonies, to the abolition of slavery, to the simple notion that people should not be judged on the basis of race, ethnicity or sexual orientation. This is why free expression is a value that stands at the center of our work to promote an open Internet. As if the revolutionary expansion of free speech represented by the Internet isn’t enough, the Net is also an unprecedented expansion of economic opportunity. Networks have always been the

backbone of economic expansion, but what is new this time is that an open Internet allows innovative economic activity to reach scope and scale at an unprecedented rate.

These are the fundamental reasons that we are considering Open Internet rules at the FCC. Some have remarked that this may be the most important decision to be made during my term. I don't know whether that is true or not, but I can assure you that I am treating it that way.

Everett Parker was motivated by a dream that the principal means of communications in this country would serve everybody, regardless of the color of their skin or the size of their paycheck. His work continues today. It is in that spirit that I am proud to accept your kind recognition.

Thank you.