

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MIGNON L. CLYBURN**

RE: Section 257 Triennial Report to Congress; Identifying and Eliminating Market Entry Barriers for Entrepreneurs and Other Small Businesses

While I support this item in large part because it identifies actions the Commission completed for the three-year period prior to December 31, 2009, I believe that the Commission can do a better job of complying with the directives of Section 257, and in reporting about the actions it has taken to meet those directives.

I take seriously the mandate of Section 257 for the Commission to identify and eliminate market entry barriers for small businesses, and to promote policies “favoring diversity of media voices, vigorous economic competition, technological advancement, and promotion of the public interest, convenience and necessity.” The Commission, however, can do more to comply with the Section 257 requirement of identifying regulations that can be prescribed to eliminate market entry barriers for small businesses. I expect that future Reports will evidence additional progress for achieving the purposes underlying Section 257 and provide more detail in describing how the Commission’s actions have fulfilled those purposes, and set forth, where appropriate, specific examples and data that support the Report’s conclusions.

This Commission, as evidenced by Chairman Genachowski’s leadership during the National Broadband Plan proceeding, is on the right track for satisfying our obligations. The Commission already has taken a number of initiatives that are in compliance with both the language and spirit of Section 257. For example, during the National Broadband Plan proceeding, the Office of Communications and Business Opportunities (OCBO), led by Director Thomas Reed, held several workshops to connect small businesses and entrepreneurs with financial experts, is developing tools to assist those entities with obtaining investment capital, and is creating online networking programs for these entities so they can connect with other businesses. In addition, OCBO is working with the Small Business Administration and Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE) to encourage public-private partnerships to help small businesses adopt broadband, including increasing their digital literacy and e-commerce skills in low-income areas as recommended in the National Broadband Plan, and is producing an online guide to help inform small business owners about what informational assistance the Commission has available for new entrants.

I expect that the next Triennial Report will recount the Commission’s actions to implement the National Broadband Plan and promote open access to the Internet. Small businesses are vital to our communications industry and our Nation’s prosperity. No one can doubt that the Internet offers a significant opportunity for small businesses and entrepreneurs to showcase their products and services to the public. President Obama has said that the Internet is “vital infrastructure” and “has become central to the daily economic life of almost every American.” The U.S. Congress also recognized the significance of the Internet when it charged the Commission with developing our National Broadband Plan to ensure that high-speed Internet is available to all Americans. And without access to high-speed Internet, small businesses, new telecommunications entrants, and entrepreneurs will find it harder and harder to survive.

A number of the recommendations in the National Broadband Plan, if adopted, will lead to further deployment and adoption of broadband throughout the Nation. An Internet that is available and accessible to all has significant potential to improve the economic lives of many, including small businesses, entrepreneurs, minorities, and women. I believe the Internet is the great equalizer for minorities and women who have struggled for a foothold in traditional media and other businesses. I am determined that the next Triennial Report will describe the Commission’s actions to help small businesses and entrepreneurs benefit from the specific recommendations in the National Broadband Plan to promote

their interests, as well as the general recommendations to improve availability and accessibility of high-speed Internet throughout the Nation.

The next Triennial Report should also show that we have not ignored the needs of communities for traditional media sources to address their diverse local interests. Mass media, whether TV or radio, off-air or via subscription, is still a significant source of news, entertainment, and emergency information for millions of Americans. It remains critically important to have opportunities for new, small, and diverse entrants in traditional media as on-air talent, creative forces, editorial voices, vendors, distributors, and owners. I am optimistic that the Commission's forthcoming actions in the Quadrennial Ownership Review, as well as in mergers and acquisitions that require our review will reflect this recognition and concern.

I urge my fellow Commissioners, and the talented staff of the Commission, to keep the goals of Section 257 in mind as we move forward. These goals should not be an afterthought as we develop our national communications policies. I believe the purpose of Section 257 is to ensure that we incorporate these goals in Commission policies, rules, and decisions as they are developed and implemented. This way, we can then look forward to an impressive recounting of actions the Commission has taken to promote policies that advance the interests of small businesses and entrepreneurs in the next 257 Triennial Report.