

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN TOM WHEELER**

Re: *Promoting the Availability of Diverse and Independent Sources of Video Programming*, MB Docket No. 16-42.

The FCC has a Congressional mandate to foster a diverse, robust, and competitive marketplace for video programming. We take this obligation seriously, and, today, we take action to better understand the barriers facing independent programmers. Thank you to Commissioner Clyburn for leading the charge on this.

This item fits hand-in-glove with the set top box NPRM we consider today. Both are about expanding the diversity of choice. While the volume of video programming available to consumers has never been greater, there are concerns that the range of diverse voices on TV is narrowing. In 2010, the Government Accountability Office examined the availability of independent programming in the media and found that, “Despite numerous programming choices in television and radio available to the public, some studies have reported that independently produced programming—that is, programming not affiliated with broadcast networks or cable operators—has decreased through the years.”

The Commission has heard time and again that independent programmers are often unable to reach enough viewers to have a viable business model, and that one of their primary obstacles to success is the demands that are made during carriage negotiations with cable operators and other MVPDs.

During consideration of the AT&T/DirecTV transaction, Commissioner Clyburn spoke out about the need for the Commission to take a fresh look at the video marketplace and examine the challenges and barriers to expanding the availability of independent and diverse programming. This is that fresh look.

Our goal is to begin a conversation on the state of independent and diverse programming. I look forward to hearing from the wealth of programmers out there on how we can promote greater consumer choice and enhance diversity by eliminating or reducing barriers faced by independent programmers in reaching viewers.

Thank you to the Media Bureau for their work on this item. Most important, thank you to Commissioner Clyburn for her leadership on the issue.