

**Remarks of Commissioner Mignon L. Clyburn
Federal Communications Commission**

*Corporation for Public Broadcasting
Board of Directors Meeting
Washington, DC
December 9, 2013*

Good evening ladies and gentlemen.

I want to thank, Pat Harrison and Patricia Cahill, for inviting me to spend a little time with you this evening, giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts on public media in our country.

I must also acknowledge the members of your board: Vice Chair Sembler; Dr. Janette Dates; Lori Gilbert; Howard Husock; Senator Pryor; Bruce Ramer, and my fellow South Carolinian, Brent Nelsen.

What a pleasure to join you in this historic building, at such a historic time, in our nation's communications policy continuum.

It's also good to see that none of you has been deterred by the nasty spate of weather we are having—who says public servants aren't hearty and committed?

We are experiencing tremendous technological innovation that affects every aspect of our lives and impacts our expectations and quality of life.

Just a few days ago, I attended the FCC's Inaugural MobileHealth Expo, where nearly two dozen companies, both large and small, displayed their communications technologies, equipment and applications... all devoted to helping Americans improve their personal health outcomes. There are some amazing developments in that space, and I would even venture to say, some very fertile opportunities for public broadcasting.

Along the same lines, while serving as Acting Chair of the Commission for just over five months, I had the opportunity to conduct ongoing discussions with consumer advocates, public interest groups, industry representatives, broadcasters, media and content providers, and others, on the wide range of challenges and opportunities, facing our country, in the next stage of communications policy.

I heard from many of you along with your viewers — about the proper role of the FCC, when it comes to regulating – or not regulating, broadcast matters. And I am sure you know, most of these folks are not shy, about voicing their opinions, on what the Commission, should or should not, be doing.

I have been greatly inspired by the ups, and learned a lot from the downs of small businesses, including minority, women and disabled veteran entrepreneurs, who are seeking to

gain traction in this space — as broadcasters, content creators, equipment suppliers, and strategic partners.

They also have high expectations in this digital era, and have not been reticent, in expressing what the FCC, the rest of government, and you, should do to advance competition, and remove barriers to entry, for new and non-traditional entrants.

As public broadcasters, I am aware that you have your own set of challenges and concerns. Your representatives have quite effectively advanced and articulated your views on key regulatory developments — some of which we at the FCC are authorized to act upon, and others which, quite frankly, are beyond the scope, of our agency's jurisdiction.

But let me say at the outset, for those who do not know me well, that I am an unabashed fan of traditional media outlets. This comes, in no small measure, from the fact, that for some 14 years, I was the general manager of a small, weekly newspaper based in Charleston, South Carolina. But long before then, I considered broadcast media a friend when no one else was around, a teacher after the dismissal bell rang, and a primary entertainment vehicle, when the budget was tight, or my punishment included being banned for two weeks from outdoor play. Sorry, I didn't mean to share that much about my childhood challenges...

Like many, my critical information needs were best met, when I tuned in to broadcast TV and radio programs. Localism was alive and well then; and today, it must remain vibrant, for this is as essential now, as ever.

I also believe that diverse communities make America strong, proud, and unique, and that we all benefit if diversity is displayed through local programming, and with our broadcast licensees.

So it should come as no surprise to you, that in my opinion, the broadcast TV industry has been, and should continue to be, an important means, of meeting the critical information needs, of our Nation's communities.

I am aware that you have some specific concerns about broadcast spectrum, and I promise not to get bogged down in the specifics, but as the Commission proceeds along the path towards holding voluntary incentive auctions in 2015, I am confident the broadcast industry will remain strong.

Why? Because Congress mandated it to be so. These auctions will be voluntary, and the Commission must make reasonable efforts, during the channel repack, to preserve the coverage area and population served, of each broadcast television licensee.

The Commission must comply with this statutory language, and carefully consider all relevant issues necessary, to properly design three key aspects of these unprecedented voluntary incentive auctions: the reverse auction, the repack of remaining broadcast TV licensees, and the forward auction.

Each of these aspects has its own set of difficult issues, and we need the engagement of all relevant parties, to design the auction properly, and make the most of this opportunity.

Of course, the forward auction will not be a success, unless a sufficient number of broadcast television stations participate. I know the staff is doing their best, to provide parties with meaningful opportunities to participate, in a process that can improve, both the mobile and broadcast industries.

It is also clear, that considerable effort went into simplifying the incentive auction, and removing as many computational challenges as possible, from broadcasters, who may be interested in relinquishing spectrum.

Staff is also providing the public with meaningful opportunities to participate in a process that can improve both the mobile and broadcast industries. I know that they spoke to APTS members in April 2011, and conducted webinars for public broadcasters in May 2011 and March 2012.

They have already conducted considerable outreach by holding a total of 20 webinars. In 2011, there were 15 webinars for the state broadcasters' associations, grouped by region, and almost 800 participated in that series.

I firmly believe that this process remains open to all reasonable recommendations, so if you need more clarity, or additional information to help you decide whether this incentive auction opportunity is the right one for you, please let us know.

However there is one approach I wish to emphasize tonight, no endorsement intended, which I believe has some interesting prospects and opportunities.

Channel sharing. Channel sharing would allow a station, to relinquish some of its spectrum, while continuing to broadcast.

What intrigues me about this approach are its key features:

1. Broadcasters get to participate in the auction, receive auction proceeds, stay on the air, and continue to serve their audiences.
2. Broadcasters can invest auction proceeds into program development or cover station operating costs.
3. Each channel sharing broadcaster remains a direct licensee of the FCC, with all rights and obligations pertinent thereto, including, importantly, must-carry rights.
4. Stations can choose their channel sharing partners, voluntarily.
5. How stations share their 6 MHz of bandwidth, is flexible, and entirely up to them.
6. And, non-commercial stations, may channel share, with commercial stations.

The senior leadership of the FCC incentive auction task force, has assured me, that both of these principles are guiding the incentive auction proceeding. The NPRM asks detailed questions, to ensure that as we design the repack process, we are considering a wide variety of reasonable proposals, to preserve the coverage area, and population of broadcast TV licensees.

And, as you know, the Chairman is committed to getting this very important process done efficiently and correctly.

Finally, ladies and gentlemen, I cannot leave without commending the public broadcast community, for its commitment to two great programs—the American Graduate Program; and Ready To Learn.

Through American Graduate, you have committed to help communities implement solutions to the high school dropout crisis, by building individual activity, community capacity, and national awareness, on the value of education.

In Ready To Learn, your funding for six public television stations, has helped preschool children from low-income families, learn to read through broadcast, online, and mobile platforms.

These partnerships with state education agencies, pre-K through second-grade classrooms, as well as child-care settings and after-school programs, are providing much needed, reading skills, support.

And why does this matter? A recent study by two leading researcher organizations confirmed, that preschool children who participated in a media-rich literary curriculum, integrating public media video content and educational games, were better prepared for kindergarten, than students who did not.

So as we face so many new challenges, I choose to stay as long as I can, on the road that is replete with opportunities. And as with many important tasks in our society, public broadcasting is leading the way and for that and more, we are all grateful.

I wish for you a safe and joyous holiday season, and thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts here tonight.

Good evening.