

**STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS
ON CHAIRMAN KEVIN MARTIN'S ANNOUNCED DEPARTURE
JANUARY 15, 2009**

Kevin Martin's announcement of his imminent departure from the FCC is historic for the institution and poignant for me, personally.

Kevin and I arrived at the Commission almost simultaneously. We went through Senate confirmation together in 2001, but because someone over at The White House screwed up his paperwork, I got the seniority edge on him by a few days—but he trumped that a few years later by becoming Chairman. We were different ages, had different backgrounds, different political affiliations and sometimes very different underlying ideas about how best to serve the public interest. But we have been through a lot together. There were frequent instances when, I am pleased to say, we were able to find common ground. The now famous—and eventually infamous—Triennial Review brought us together as we fought for what we thought Congress meant when it instructed the Commission to encourage competition in the telephone industry. We developed, early on, a shared concern over the excesses of violence and family-unfriendly fare on the broadcast airwaves. We each had a special interest in public safety and we found common ground on ways to move it to the forefront. I watched Kevin, as Chairman, put public safety front-and-center here at the Commission, which is exactly where it long needed to be. His leadership after Hurricane Katrina devastated the Gulf Coast will surely be remembered as one of the highlights of his, or any, Chairmanship. We made progress together on instituting and enforcing Internet Openness Principles and took first steps down a road toward a network neutrality regime. We pushed for a more open wireless marketplace. And we pulled together trying to make the Wilmington, North Carolina DTV transition a success.

None of this is to paper over our very real differences on many matters of substance and process, with media consolidation, broadband competition policy and Commission transparency coming immediately to mind. But this is not the time or place to revisit things divisive. Sometimes Kevin confounded Commission-watchers by putting forward very original ideas that those who didn't know him might never have expected. This made some folks happy, some unhappy and others occasionally frantic. But it could also be refreshing. To his credit, his proposals often challenged his fellow Commissioners to get under the hood and examine their own assumptions. He compelled us to develop our own ideas to address the problem at hand. The Rural Health Care Pilot Program was one such idea and it was, and is, a signal accomplishment of Kevin's Chairmanship.

I also welcomed his efforts to increase the number of public Commission hearings around the country on such issues as media ownership and net neutrality. It's no secret that I would have liked even more such hearings, but the record is that under Kevin, the Commission *did* get out of Washington and hear from the public and from experts on public policy issues that cried out for such input.

Over the years, Kevin and I had some very candid discussions—with the bark off, as Lyndon Johnson used to say—as we sought common ground on contentious matters. We quickly discovered that we could talk candidly, respect confidences, and, not infrequently, find ways to move the Commission’s business forward. When our discussions did not yield agreement, we disagreed without ever being disagreeable. When we gave our word to one another, that word was honored. We understood that we came to some issues with fundamentally different ideas about what the Commission ought to be doing and how it ought to be doing it, but we recognized that each of us believed in our individual approaches, and we shied away from attributing bad motivation to each other. This didn’t resolve all problems—don’t read more into this than I’m saying—but it allowed us to build a working relationship on a personal level that I think was helpful.

We should also remember that those High Noon moments at the Commission, when the cameras pack this room, the media is hanging on every uttered word and perceived nuance, and everyone is waiting to see who is going to draw their Colt 45 first, are not the daily norm here. Probably 90 per cent or more of what the Commission decides is decided through consensus. Our discussions are not duels in the sun, but more often searches for understanding the facts of a case, the meaning of a statute, or the arcania of legislative history.

Kevin Martin will hopefully continue to contribute, no matter where he is, on the issues to which he has devoted so much time and energy at the FCC. I look forward to his ideas and input and to many opportunities to talk and work together in the years ahead. He has had a busy time of it here—first as a staffer, then as Commissioner, and finally as Chairman. He works long, he works hard and he brings keen and creative intelligence to whatever he does. I imagine these have been very demanding years for Kevin and Cathie and their two—soon to be three—children. The prospect of having at least a little more relaxed pace must look very attractive to them. Beth and I certainly wish Kevin and his growing family all good things on the road ahead, and we look forward to continuing the friendship that we have developed. I thank him for his many kindnesses and courtesies to me, for his kind words today, and for the friendship we will continue to enjoy in the years ahead.