

**Opening Statement
of
Robert M. McDowell**

**Nominee
Commissioner, Federal Communications Commission**

**Before the
United States Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation**

March 9, 2006

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Mr. Chairman, Co-chairman Inouye and Members of the Committee, it is a privilege to be able to appear before you today.

Please allow me to thank my mentors and friends from the Virginia delegation, Senator Allen, and Congressmen Davis, for their generous remarks. I also thank Senator Warner and Congressman Wolf for their kind statements submitted for the record. I would not be here today were it not for my family seated behind me: my bride, Jennifer; my son, Griffin Malcolm; my daughter, Mary-Shea Virginia, as well as my father and sister. Thank you for your love and support. Poignantly, our thoughts are with my mom, Martha Shea McDowell, who passed away just last July and is unable to witness this day, at least from an earthly perspective.

I am deeply honored by President Bush's decision to nominate me to serve as a Commissioner of the Federal Communications Commission. Over the past few weeks, I have had the pleasure of meeting with many Members of the Committee, and I thank all of you for taking time out of your busy schedules to share your thoughts about communications policy and the FCC with me. If confirmed, I look forward to continuing our dialogue.

This coming October 19, in Virginia, we will commemorate the 225th anniversary of the Americans' victory over the British at Yorktown. This battle effectively ended the war where a rag-tag band of freedom fighters defeated the largest superpower in the world. On that crisp autumn day, as the vanquished British troops withdrew from the battlefield, they marched to the tune of "The World Turned Upside Down." For the

British, the old world had been turned upside down. But for freedom and democracy, the new world had been turned right side up. George Washington and his fellow patriots won largely because of their belief that the dissemination of self-evident truths could shatter the walls of tyranny. They had laid the foundation of a new nation built upon the twin cornerstones of free markets and free ideas - for all.

At the heart of the ideals of the fledgling United States was a profound commitment to the freedom of speech – the freedom to communicate. No agency has more of an effect on the preservation and promotion of this freedom than the Federal Communications Commission. If confirmed, I solemnly pledge to be true to those founding principles – to work tirelessly to promote free markets and the free expression of ideas.

With the advent of new technologies, the old world of communications has been “turned upside down.” But these advances have turned the new world right side up for freedom, democracy and capitalism. Long ago, Thomas Jefferson envisioned the benefits brought forth by the free flow of information when he wrote, “Enlighten the people ... and tyranny and oppressions of body and mind will vanish like evil spirits at the dawn of day.”¹ Jefferson’s words were nearly prophetic in predicting the Digital Revolution. Today, American consumers are more empowered with information than ever before, thanks to brave and brilliant entrepreneurs, increased competition and less government regulation. But there is more to do.

If confirmed, I will commit myself to:

- promoting competition and investment in all markets;

¹ Thomas Jefferson to Pierre Samuel Dupont de Nemours, 1816.

- clearing the cumbersome underbrush of unnecessary government regulation;
- encouraging *private sector* solutions to many of the challenges facing the communications industry; and
- removing barriers to entry.

All Americans should be able to benefit from the Digital Revolution, and the FCC should strive to help American consumers realize that goal.

If confirmed, I will bring to the Commission nearly sixteen years of private sector experience in the communications industry. And, with your approval, I will also bring with me a strong passion for *bipartisan* public service. In my career, in addition to counseling technology entrepreneurs, I have served as a legislative aide to a Member of the Virginia General Assembly, actively worked on bipartisan statutory boards as appointed by two Virginia governors, and led efforts to make my community a better place to live, work and raise a family. If confirmed, I will use this experience to help me approach each issue that comes before the Commission with energy, impartiality and thoughtfulness. I will endeavor to keep the spirit of Yorktown alive by working every day toward enhancing the lives and liberty of all Americans.

In my opinion, the four current commissioners, as led by Chairman Martin, are among the most talented and thoughtful people ever to have served on the FCC. And, if confirmed, I would be honored and humbled to join them.

Mr. Chairman and Co-chairman Inouye, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. That concludes my brief statement and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.