



Office of Commissioner Robert M. McDowell
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

January 27, 2009

The Honorable Michael J. Copps
Acting Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mike:

Once again, congratulations on being named Acting Chairman. Additionally, thank you for your dedication and commitment to public service and the Commission. It goes without saying that I am looking forward to continuing to work with you.

I am greatly encouraged and energized to know that you, Commissioner Adelstein and I will be working together toward the goals of boosting employee morale, promoting greater transparency, as well as creating a more informed, collaborative and considerate decision-making process, all aimed toward advancing the timely and orderly resolution of Commission business. Thank you for addressing these and many other issues within minutes of becoming Acting Chairman. I certainly appreciate the new atmosphere you are creating at the Commission, and I know that the FCC's talented and dedicated career employees appreciate your efforts as well. Accordingly, with the utmost respect for you, the Commission staff and the new Obama Administration, I offer below several preliminary suggestions on achieving the important public interest objectives of reforming this agency. My letter is intended to continue a thoughtful dialogue on moving forward together to improve the public's ability to participate in our work, as well as our overall decision-making abilities. Our collaborative efforts to rebuild the agency should not be limited to the thoughts outlined in this brief letter. As you and I have discussed many of these ideas already, let this merely serve as a starting point for a more public discussion that should examine a larger constellation of ideas.

I would first recommend that we commence a thorough operational, financial and ethics audit of the Commission and its related entities, such as the Universal Service Administrative Company and the Federal Advisory Committees. As with all FCC reform endeavors, I hope that all of the commissioners will be involved in this process, including its development and initiation. We should seek comment from the public and the Commission staff, and we should provide Commission employees with an opportunity to submit comments anonymously.

I would also suggest that we work to update and republish the Commission's strategic plan. Completing this task would create a solid framework for future actions and demonstrate our commitment to transparency and orderliness, each of which is critical to effective decision making.

The findings of our review, combined with our work to develop a new strategic plan, would provide us with the information and ideas necessary for considering a potential restructuring of the agency. I am not suggesting that we make change for the sake of change. After all, we agree that the agency needs to be flexible and must be responsive to its myriad stakeholders, most importantly American consumers. There are, however, steps we likely would want to implement to increase our efficiency. For example, as you have already stated, delegating some authority back to upper and mid-level management, filling many of the numerous open positions with highly-qualified applicants and making more efficient use of non-attorney professionals come to mind.

As we have also discussed previously, we need to improve our external communications regarding FCC processes and actions. As an immediate first step, I suggest that we swiftly establish and publish Open Meeting dates for the entire 2009 calendar year. The public, not to mention the staff, would also greatly benefit if we would provide at least six months' notice on meeting dates for 2010 and beyond.

Also, we agree that we need to overhaul our internal information flow, collaboration and processes. I am eager to continue to work with you and Commissioner Adelstein to identify and implement measures to increase coordination among the commissioner offices, between commissioner offices and the staff, as well as among the staff. It is important that we cooperate with each other to foster open and thoughtful consideration of potential actions well before jumping into the drafting process.

As part of these communications improvements, I share your desire to update the Commission's IT and web systems. They are in dire need of an overhaul. Clear, concise and well-organized information systems will ensure that all public information is available, easily located and understandable.

Finally, I propose that the commissioners work together to build an ongoing and meaningful rapport with other facets of government, especially in the consumer protection, homeland security, and technology areas. I am confident that close collaboration with our government colleagues with similar or overlapping responsibilities would greatly benefit the constituencies we serve.

In closing, Mike, I again extend my warmest congratulations on your designation as Acting Chairman. I look forward to working together with you and Commissioner Adelstein to improve our agency during the coming days and weeks.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert M. McDowell". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "R".

Robert M. McDowell

cc: The Honorable Jonathan S. Adelstein