

April 23, 2013

President Barack H. Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The imminent departures of Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Julius Genachowski and Commissioner Robert McDowell present your administration with an opportunity to nominate candidates who will assign the highest priority to racial and ethnic minority and women's participation in the nation's most influential industries. The FCC needs leaders committed to reversing the extraordinarily low representation of minorities and women in media and telecom ownership, procurement and employment.

Minority and women's participation in broadcast ownership is particularly at risk, as they continue to decline rapidly. A 2009 study by the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council (MMTC) found that minorities owned just 7% of the nation's 11,000 full power radio stations and 3% of the nation's full power television stations. Last year, the Women's Media Center found that in 2011, women owned fewer than 7% of our nation's radio stations and television stations.

Much could be done about this: a coalition of 57 national organizations has on file with the FCC 71 proposals to advance MWBE entrepreneurship and procurement in media and telecom. Several of these proposals have been pending for more than ten years, and a proposal for incubation of new radio entrants has been pending before the FCC in seven dockets for 23 years. Former Commissioners Michael Copps and Deborah Taylor Tate have encouraged the FCC to vote – up or down – on the 71 proposals.

The employment market for minorities and women in communications is also rather bleak. A Radio and Television Digital News Association (RTDNA) 2012 survey reports that minority and women employment in television and radio management and journalism is static and underinclusive. In 2007, MMTC found that minority employment at non-minority owned, English language radio news departments was statistically zero – about where it was in 1950. Yet FCC EEO enforcement levels, measured in forfeitures and caseload, are but 2% of their levels during the Clinton administration.

As you know, the Commission oversees industries constituting 1/6 of our economy, creating over 70% of new jobs, and producing our greatest exports. In the next three years, FCC will be called upon to modernize our telephone systems, rationalize our spectrum policy, and achieve your administration's goals of universal broadband access, adoption and informed use. As part of the unprecedented transformation of our economy from the industrial to the digital age, it is imperative that the FCC has leaders firmly committed to delivering first class digital citizenship to all Americans, including historically marginalized populations. We ask that you appoint such people. We are pleased to offer your administration our assistance in achieving this objective.

Sincerely,

Fifty National Organizations:

Alliance for Community Media
Alliance for Women in Media
American Indians in Film and Television
Asian Pacific American Institute for Congressional Studies
Benton Foundation
Black College Communication Association
Black Entertainment and Sports Lawyers Association
Black Leadership Forum, Inc.
Hispanic Elected Local Officials
International Black Broadcasters Association
Latinos in Information Sciences and Technology Association

Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA – A National Latina Organization
Minority Media and Telecommunications Council
NAACP
National Association for Equal Opportunity in Higher Education
National Association of Black County Officials
National Association of Black Elected Legislative Women
National Association of Black Telecommunications Professionals
National Association of Hispanic Publications
National Association of Latino Elected Officials
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Association of Multicultural Digital Entrepreneurs
National Bar Association
National Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials
National Black Caucus of State Legislators
National Black College Alumni Hall of Fame Foundation, Inc.
National Black Chamber of Commerce
National Black Farmers Association
National Conference of Black Mayors
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Congress of American Indians
National Congress of Black Women, Inc.
National Council of Negro Women
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Indian Telecommunications Institute
National Korean American Service & Education Consortium
National Newspaper Publishers Association
National Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce
National Puerto Rican Coalition
Native American Journalists Association
Organization of Chinese Americans
Public Knowledge
Rainbow PUSH Coalition
United Negro College Fund
UNITY: Journalists for Diversity, Inc.
Universal Impact
Vision Maker Media
Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press

The contact person for this letter is David Honig, President, Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, 3636 16th St. N.W., Suite B-366, Washington, DC 20010, (202) 332-0500; dhonig@crosslink.net. The organizations signing this letter are nonprofit associations dedicated to promoting communications in the public interests. This letter reflects the institutional views of the organizations and is not intended to reflect the views of the organizations' individual officers, directors or advisors.