

Remarks of Commissioner Robert McDowell

**Federal Communications Commission
Office of Communications Business Opportunities
Capitalization Strategies Workshop for Small, Women and Minority-Owned
Businesses**

(As prepared for Delivery)

**Friday, November 12, 2009
Commission Meeting Room**

Thank you Chairman Genachowski for your kind introduction. I am very pleased – once again – to offer a few words of welcome at what has become an annual event at the FCC. I have heard positive reactions regarding last year's event, and I hope that this year's gathering also proves useful for all attendees.

As of Tuesday, registration for this event was tracking well ahead of last year's gathering – more than 100 registered to participate in person, with many others expected to join online. The numbers show that there is no dearth of entrepreneurial spirit among America's business people, even in a challenging economy. Still, there is widespread agreement that access to capital is the biggest hurdle facing entrepreneurs, including minorities and women, who hope to enter and thrive in the communications arena.

Throughout my time as a Commissioner, I have called for greater awareness of the financial realities that face small enterprises and new entrants. The Commission is currently considering a number of steps that it might take to promote diversity and encourage new entrants into all facets of the communications industry under our jurisdiction. Rulemakings can be slow to progress, however, so I am pleased that we are continuing to provide some practical support for you, right now, in the form of information sharing and networking opportunities. In that regard, I thank our government colleagues from U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Department of Commerce, the Small Business Administration, and the U.S. Senate Committee on Small Business and Entrepreneurship for coming to the Commission to share their insights and advice.

But it is particularly gratifying to see representatives from so many private investment entities join us for today's second panel – because it is the private sector, of course, that really drives investment and economic growth. It is the source of *sustainable* seed capital for all the good ideas that entrepreneurs hope to bring to the marketplace to benefit American consumers.

The freedom to launch new ventures, and the freedom to invest in good ideas, are among the many freedoms that Americans sometimes take for granted. I've been reminded of that by this week's anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Twenty-one years ago, on November 9th, East Germans began to enjoy the political, social and

economic opportunities they had been denied for generations by an oppressive government. Although different from the circumstances emanating from the scourge of Communism, our country has its own history of denied opportunities for some of our citizens. It is therefore constructive to do what we can now to help forge business connections between people that may have been lacking in the past.

This afternoon's break-out sessions should be particularly useful in that regard. I am very grateful to all the panelists who have agreed to meet with the workshop participants in one-on-one discussions about the strengths and weaknesses of individual business plans. I hope and expect that today's workshop experience will expand the personal networks that are so critical to business success. Perhaps the personal networks that are forged today will help produce the physical communications networks of the future.

I also look forward to continuing a dialogue with the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council and other entities about the many issues affecting minority and female ownership of communications enterprises. Preparing for today's workshop reminded me that next month will mark the third anniversary of the Commission's historic Diversity Order. That Order adopted 13 new rules and recommendations to further the cause of giving entrepreneurs of all kinds, such as women and people of color, an equal opportunity to succeed. The Diversity Order was all the more historic because it adopted the first federal civil rights rule in more than a generation: the ban on "no urban, no Hispanic" dictates in advertising. I was proud to have worked closely with my colleagues, especially Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein, in fashioning that rule.

Much more can be done, of course, including helping Congress understand the benefits of reinstating an improved tax certificate program to help provide incentives for small, disadvantaged, minority-owned and women-owned businesses to buy communications properties.

Many thanks again to Tom Reed and his terrific team in the Office of Communications Business Opportunities for their leadership in putting this event together. Once this event is over, don't hesitate to let me know what you thought about it – and how we might improve it in future years. I'm interested!