



Press Statement

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The 50th Anniversary of the United Church of Christ's Petition for the FCC's EEO Rule

WASHINGTON, D.C. (April 21, 2017): The Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) notes a landmark in civil rights history: the April 24, 1967 United Church of Christ (UCC) Petition asking the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to adopt a rule barring race and gender discrimination in broadcast station employment. Today, MMTC asks the FCC to complete the journey UCC began in 1967 by completing the long-dormant EEO rulemaking and restoring strong broadcast EEO enforcement.

The 1967 EEO rulemaking petition, drafted by Dr. Everett Parker and attorney Earle K. Moore, was granted by the FCC on July 3, 1968, making the FCC the first federal agency to require its licensees to practice employment nondiscrimination. The petition was an outgrowth of the 1965 Petition by the Office of Communication of the UCC seeking a hearing on the license renewal of WLBT-TV in Jackson, Mississippi.

Dr. Parker first asked the FCC to consider banning employment discrimination in broadcasting in 1934, six weeks after the FCC was created. Dr. Parker went on to co-found MMTC and serve for three decades as an MMTC Director and Officer. Dr. Parker passed away in 2016 at the age of 102.

Mr. Moore, a noted corporate attorney, brought several landmark cases *pro bono* for the UCC's Office of Communication, including the 1966 D.C. Circuit case that established citizen standing in broadcast licensing proceedings. In Mr. Moore's honor, MMTC created the Earle K. Moore Fellowship Program to train attorneys and law students to practice civil rights law before the FCC.

Andrew Jay Schwartzman represented UCC in the early 1970s' cases that ensured that the FCC would aggressively implement its new EEO regulations. Today Mr. Schwartzman is the Benton Senior Counselor at Georgetown University Law Center's Institute for Public Representation. He has served since 1994 on the MMTC Board of Directors.

The Office of Communication, Inc. (OC, Inc.) continues to operate a comprehensive telecommunications and civil rights advocacy program, led by Cheryl Leanza. MMTC often aligns itself with OC, Inc., on civil rights issues before the FCC.

The EEO Rules have evolved over the years, but the ongoing EEO rulemaking docket (MB 98-204) has been virtually inactive since 2004 notwithstanding the efforts of MMTC, OC Inc., and others to persuade the agency to act on pending proposals by 48 national organizations to strengthen EEO enforcement. The most critical pending proposal is for the FCC to hold hearings on whether to deny renewal of the licenses of companies that recruit almost entirely by word of mouth from a homogeneous station workforce – a practice the FCC has recognized since 1980 as inherently discriminatory.

Kim Keenan, President and CEO of MMTC, made the following statement:

The FCC's EEO Rule aligns opportunity with the public interest. The broadcasting industry in 1968 was virtually closed to people of color, with only 5% diverse employment. Today it stands at well over 20%, largely because of the UCC Petition. The UCC Office of Communication's pioneering work of the last fifty years has demonstrated the benefits of a diverse workforce.

We encourage the FCC to mark the 50th Anniversary of the UCC EEO Petition by pledging to complete this groundbreaking work in MB Docket 98-204, the broadcast EEO docket, by Christmas of 2017.

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About MMTC:

The Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) is a non-partisan, national nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and preserving equal opportunity and civil rights in the mass media, telecom and broadband industries, and closing the digital divide. MMTC is generally recognized as the nation's leading advocate for minority advancement in communications.