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FCC VOTES UNANIMOUSLY TO STRENGTHEN EEO ENFORCEMENT

Chairman Pai Discusses Importance of Employment Diversity in Fireside Chat with MMTC

WASHINGTON, D.C. (July 26, 2018): The Federal Communications Commission has announced its unanimous decision to move enforcement of its Equal Employment Opportunity policies from its Media Bureau to its Enforcement Bureau, just weeks after FCC Chairman Ajit Pai recommended this action on July 3rd, 2018, the 50th anniversary of the date on which the FCC became the first federal agency to require its licensees to practice equal opportunity in employment. The Multicultural Media, Telecom and Internet Council (MMTC) lauds this decision, which codified a recommendation made by MMTC and 32 other national civil rights and social justice organizations (the “EEO Supporters”).

In a fireside chat with MMTC’s Director of Communications and Editor-in-Chief Marcella Gadson, aired during MMTC’s July 19th Access to Capital and Telecom Policy Conference, Chairman Pai shared details about the process that resulted in his recommendation to move EEO enforcement to the Enforcement Bureau, and his recognition of the historic implications of doing so on the 50th anniversary of the FCC’s decision requiring broadcasters to practice equal employment opportunity:

“...July 3rd, 1968, was a really important day in FCC and American history. We became the first agency to target discrimination in hiring. MMTC over the years had been at the vanguard, making sure that every American, regardless of what he or she looks like, or where they come from, has a chance to succeed in the industry. First and foremost: there’s nothing more American than [equal employment opportunity], that every American has a chance to compete and to succeed in the marketplace, whether it’s getting a job or starting a business. [This move] will allow the FCC to prioritize the enforcement of these rules. ... The EEO rules are very high priority, and we’re going to make sure, through enforcement resources, that we make sure that everybody is free to compete for these jobs without the legacy of discrimination that has held too many back for so long.”

In the discussion, Chairman Pai also expressed his optimism that the FCC’s leadership in this area would serve as an example for other industries, such as tech, that have a history of diversity and inclusion deficiencies:

“When you look at Silicon Valley, it becomes apparent that there is some way to go before people have equal opportunity. Certainly, as the chairman of this agency, and the only minority serving as a commissioner currently, I want to make sure that the FCC is using the bully pulpit, and the Diversity Committee is using the bully pulpit, in a way that draws attention to these issues.”

MMTC President and CEO Maurita Coley Flippin stated, “The FCC’s decision to move EEO enforcement from the Media Bureau to the Enforcement Bureau on an historic 50th Anniversary is powerful in its symbolism, and it sends the message that the FCC cares about diversity and inclusion in the regulated communications industries. But the fact that an FCC that is often divided on communications policy issues can unanimously agree on equal employment opportunity sends a good message.”

As MMTC stated in its July 3, 2018, press release, the FCC’s 1968 decision was laudable and game-changing; but fifty years later, there remains much to do. Minority broadcast ownership did not exceed 1% of the number of stations until 1982, and 50 years later, broadcast ownership is less than 1% of industry asset value – and is in decline. Today, minorities are underrepresented in tech ownership, employment diversity, and broadband adoption even as evolving technology becomes increasingly enmeshed in our everyday lives. The Commission’s decision says, “We are better than this.” It is a good start.

Chairman Pai’s full fireside chat interview with MMTC is available here, MMTC’s July 3rd press release is available here, and the April 30th comments of the EEO Supporters are available here.

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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 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.