

FCC to Consider the State of Broadcast Journalism

Digital Media and Data Privacy Law Blog

on 07.10.2009

Posted in FCC Matters

According to news reports, Commissioner Michael Copps is passing a document around the Federal Communications Commission concerning the “state of journalism.” Although the report is not yet publicly available, CNSNews.com is reporting that it “examines the decline of broadcast journalism over the past several years and tries to explain why traditional forms of journalism have declined while other, newer forms have been on the rise.”

It appears that the report is tied to a formal (though not yet public) Notice of Inquiry. Issuing an NOI is often the first step to initiate a formal agency rulemaking process whereby the government seeks comment from interested parties on a number of identified topics. New regulations may or may not be issued at the conclusion of such a rulemaking procedure.

According to CNSNews.com, “[t]he decline of traditional print and broadcast outlets is the primary focus of the report, which analyzes which new outlets are picking up the slack – and why they might be eclipsing traditional news outlets.” The document also apparently deals with broadcasters’ public interest obligations, which have long been touchstone issues for Commissioner Copps. The NOI could be the first step in seeking to impose tougher public interest obligations on broadcasters.

While the NOI is not yet public, Commissioner Copps’s point of view on the “state of journalism” is well captured in public remarks he made earlier this year.

It’s too soon to tell how high a priority this possible “state of journalism” NOI will be for the nearly reconstituted FCC, now headed by Commissioner Julius Genachowski. We will continue to monitor this story.