

**Remarks of Chairman Marsha Blackburn  
House Energy and Commerce Committee,  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
To The Media Institute  
Friends & Benefactors Awards Banquet  
September 27, 2017**

Good evening and thank you to Mr. Wiley for that very kind introduction. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to address this gathering of friends, to honor some of the finest professionals the industry has for their service, and to celebrate the nation that has allowed for the development of the most robust media industry the world has ever seen.

Congratulations to Dave Lougee on receiving the American Horizon Award, a fitting honor for a leading visionary in his field. Let me also extend my congratulations to Jeffrey Herbst. Dr. Herbst has led the Newseum here the last couple years, and has long been a fighter for First Amendment rights, which seem to need a good fighter now more than ever.

It's important you honor these two individuals, and celebrate the freedoms we enjoy in this country. It's important because in today's environment we must have a standard for exceptionalism. You all are very fine people (especially if you're from Tennessee), but to strive for exceptionalism is a goal we should work at every day, making sure that whatever medium of communication you are using to reach someone, you are doing so with the utmost integrity.

Our words and actions matter. As one of your own said, "The speed of communications is wondrous to behold. It is also true that speed can multiply the distribution of information that we know to be untrue."

It's a very timely quote, especially with the challenges you face in your respective occupations. The irony, of course, is that Edward R. Murrow said it over 50 years ago. And ever since, technological innovation has continued to speed up the flow of information, from the change newspapers had to undergo with the advent of radio, and both of those mediums with the advent of television, and of course the present with the Internet.

All along the way, through every transition, the media has continued to uphold responsibilities and fulfill obligations, while some competitors do not have such obligations, or require any particular standards.

And yet, in the profession of journalism everyone must live by a standard -- a code of ethics for all those who engage in journalism to follow. It's important that the Society of Professional Journalism set up such a standard. A newly minted journalist doesn't have to have a particular degree and pass a particular exam, as lawyers do, or be certified as accountants do, or of course go to medical school and intern at a hospital like a doctor. So it is important to have guidelines to maintain the public trust.

I believe it is more important to set a standard as opposed to a rule. When you think of setting a

rule, it's often looked at as something you get up close to and stop. However, with a standard you work hard to honor that standard and excel beyond. Kind of like if you told a lawyer he could never go be a broadcaster – that would have deprived Tennesseans of about 35 years of listening to John Ward play-by-play being the “Voice of the Vols.”

Just a few weeks ago in the Communications & Technology Subcommittee we heard from another professional in the media space who has dedicated her career to the pursuit of exceptionalism. Lyn Plantinga of NewsChannel 5 in Nashville came to Washington to take part in our hearing on the opportunities and challenges presented by the repacking process that is starting to take place in the wake of the broadcast incentive auction. Lyn and her station have shown an extraordinarily high level of dedication to serving their community and carrying out their mission of keeping viewers informed and safe. In emergency situations such as the deadly 500-year flood that hit Nashville in 2010, NewsChannel 5 kept up their 24/7 coverage even as their own newsroom flooded. On a daily basis, they produce top quality, award-winning local news coverage, exposing corruption, protecting consumers, and effecting positive change. And when it comes to supporting the community's needs, charitable organizations from the Vanderbilt Children's Hospital to the Second Harvest food bank could have no greater friend.

I know that there are many more dedicated professionals throughout this room and throughout the industry who are working tirelessly to exceed expectations. And many share the concerns Lyn highlighted to the Subcommittee about potential trouble spots as we move forward with repacking. That's why I wanted to go directly to the source for the latest update on progress. Both my fellow Committee members and I were very encouraged by what we heard. With all of the effort being put in by all affected parties to make for a smooth transition, the repack so far is shaping up to be an impressive collaborative process. If this focus and energy continues, we will hopefully have another great success story for the media industry at the end.

It's extremely important that we get this right and get to that positive outcome we are all looking for as quickly as possible, because rural America continues to suffer from lack of modern communications services. When I'm at home in Tennessee, the need for broadband is one of the top concerns I hear about over and over. Many rural parts of America are being left behind in the digital revolution that is taking place, with no opportunity to experience the transformative power of broadband. We are all too keenly aware that workforce training, education, healthcare, and economic development are all being compromised as this situation continues day by day, and year by year.

But as technologies converge and transform into new methods of communication, broadband infrastructure has become a critical vector for the media industry as well. The day is quickly approaching when consumers will be seeing or hearing their news and entertainment over a broadband connection as much as, or more than, they do over the airwaves or MVPD systems. We are already seeing a wide proliferation of apps and new technologies that bring media content directly to the consumer, on demand, wherever they may be, and with the implementation of ATSC 3.0, broadcast content will merge with online content to an even greater extent.

So, the incentive auction and the repacking process presents a great opportunity for a win/win/win situation for broadband providers, the media, and most especially the rural American consumer. And the Committee does not intend to stop there. We are working on ways to ensure more accurate deployment data, ways to streamline the process, and ways to support further expansion of this critical 21<sup>st</sup> century infrastructure. With the surge we expect to see in broadband deployment, the media industry will have access to more eyes and ears than ever before. And I know that when you do, you will continue to keep the high standards in mind.

On the Committee, we are also working with our colleagues on reauthorizing the FCC, bringing the agency up to date and making it a better partner in your efforts. Chairman Pai has made an impressive start on addressing the process deficiencies that Congress has focused on in past Commissions, ushering in a new era of transparency at the Commission.

However, there is lots more that can and should be done, and if a statutory change can help, we want to make that happen. We are also looking at getting some of the reforms that have already taken place into law, to relieve future Chairmen of the strong temptation to turn around and go right back to the old game of hide the ball.

We need to keep looking for more ways to address the crushing regulatory load American businesses are carrying, which is of particular concern when businesses like yours are operating under outdated rules that newer competitors don't need to worry about. A level playing field may be a cliché, but it is, and should be, a top priority for legislators and regulators calling the shots. For example, the media ownership rules are a relic from a different time and place, and a completely different concept of "media." Our proposed reauthorization bill includes relief from the newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership rule, a proposal that has had some bipartisan support in the past. We should at least be able to agree to this slight nod to reality as a first step in considering further reform.

From a broader perspective, we cannot overstate the importance of tax reform to unleash innovation and explosive growth across every American industry. With the tax reform framework we released today, we aim to slash the corporate tax rate from 35% to 20% – below the 22.5% average of the industrialized world – so American companies will be more competitive. We limit the maximum tax rate applied to business income of some small and family-owned businesses to 25% so they can focus dollars on investment, growth, and job creation. We make it easier for businesses to buy new assets by allowing them to expense the cost of these new investments. Through closing special interest loopholes, simplifying our tax code, and bringing rates down, we free our businesses from the stranglehold of bureaucracy and the burdens of navigating the complex maze that is our tax system.

And finally, we must continue and strengthen efforts to protect one of our top exports – our intellectual property. Our new U.S. Trade Representative, Robert Lighthizer, has put a strong emphasis on enforcing IP protections, and the issue features prominently in the bilateral trade discussions currently under way with Malaysia, as well as the section 301 investigation of China's practices related to technology transfer and intellectual property. American innovators and content creators must have a full and fair opportunity to use and profit from their creations.

With that, I will turn the program back over to my friend Mr. Wiley. Thanks so much for your work, and continuing to live up to the standards exemplified by our honorees here tonight.