



March 22, 2013

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We're writing to make sure that with all that crosses your desk, you see a piece of good news. The best qualified candidates to chair the Federal Communications Commission are all women. You will be able make good policy and good history at the same time.

You have the chance to democratize the media with one key appointment when you nominate the next Chair of the Federal Communications Commission. We are writing to urge you to pick a woman.

This would be a truly historic appointment. There has never been a female chair of the Federal Communications Commission and a woman chair would go far to making women more visible and powerful in the media and technology.

As we step into 2013, women are still underrepresented in the leadership of America's media and its technology industries. Women hold only 6 percent of all TV and radio station licenses and under one-third of TV news directors are women. Of top executives working for technology companies just over 5 percent are women. Media companies have some of the most powerful resources at their disposal in shaping attitudes and culture. And as the Internet transforms American media and telecommunications, it has become central to the nation's competitiveness as well as the future of culture, news, and communication.

A number of well-qualified candidates are [reported](#) by The National Journal to be under consideration for the top job at the FCC, including former OECD Ambassador, Karen Kornbluh, current FCC Commissioners Mignon Clyburn and Jessica Rosenworcel, Clinton administration FCC executives Susan Ness and Cathy Sandoval.

While there is no easy fix to getting women into the top jobs in the telecom and media industries, the government watchdog can and should be headed by a woman. The FCC holds broad regulatory power over the most important media, communications, and technology companies in the United States. Plus, there is a powerful "bully pulpit" effect to having women at the head of this agency.

You earned the majority of the women's vote because you represented views on issues from violence against women to pay equity. In your second term you can demonstrate your commitment to equality in leadership in a different but equally important area of the federal government, oversight of the media and telecom industries.

The FCC's broad regulatory authority over huge swaths of the U.S. economy makes it a very powerful government agency and over the next year it will face a series of critical decision points

– from how to structure a complex wireless spectrum auction to how to respond to an anticipated decision in a legal challenge over its authority to enforce its “Open Internet” rules. In addition, it must decide how to help improve broadband speed, service, and pricing in the United States when its rules are under pressure from industry. In the late 1990s the US had the highest broadband speeds and penetration rates of almost anywhere but today the U.S. comes in sixteenth and the average U.S. cost per megabit per second is several times that in South Korea, France, and the UK.

The next FCC chair must be someone who is willing to put the public’s interests first and work to ensure that American businesses and workers have the tools they need to ensure U.S. competitiveness in the 21st century. Consumers want an independent FCC chair – not an industry insider – but someone who is willing to put the needs of consumers over the desires of industry executives.

The identity and personal experience of a regulatory chief matters. William Kennard, for example, who was appointed the first African-American chair of the agency by President Bill Clinton, made a top priority of closing the digital divide for African-Americans and for Americans with disabilities. Never in the 80 years of the FCC has a woman of any race or group been its chair, though women have been the nation's majority for a long time.

The post atop the FCC is one of the most important opportunities available to raise the bar for representational diversity and decision-making in the media and telecom sectors, which are the infrastructure of this generation and of the future.

[This petition](#) has already been signed by activists from across the country who agree with us that the time is now for the FCC to be headed by a woman. The time is now.

Most Respectfully,

Siobhan “Sam” Bennett
President & CEO of She Should Run

Julie Burton
President of The Women’s Media Center

Melanie Campbell
CEO & Executive Director of the National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

Geena Davis
Founder of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

Margot Dorfman
CEO of the U.S. Women’s Chamber of Commerce

Madeline Di Nonno
Executive Director of the Geena Davis Institute on Gender in Media

Lauren Embrey
Chair of the Board of The Women's Media Center

Gloria Feldt
Co-Founder and President of Take The Lead

Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner
Executive Director & CEO of MomsRising

Sandra Finley
President & CEO of the League of Black Women

Jaclyn Friedman
Executive Director of Women, Action & the Media

Jane Fonda
Co-Founder of The Women's Media Center

Kim Gandy
President & CEO of the National Network to End Domestic Violence

Andrea Gleaves
Chair of the Women's Information Network

Eleanor Hinton Hoytt
President and CEO of Black Women's Health Imperative

Grace Kaissal
Political Director of the Women's Information Network

Shelby Knox
Director of Women's Rights Campaigns for Change.org

Terry Lawler
Executive Director of New York Women in Film & Television

Pat Mitchell
President and CEO of The Paley Center for Media

Robin Morgan
Co-Founder of The Women's Media Center

Terry O'Neill
President, National Organization for Women Foundation

Anika Rahman
President & CEO of the Ms. Foundation for Women

Susan Scanlan
Chair of the National Council of Women's Organizations

Karen See
President of the Coalition of Labor Union Women

Eleanor Smeal
President of the Feminist Majority Foundation

Katherine Spillar
Executive Editor of Ms. Magazine

Gloria Steinem
Co-Founder of The Women's Media Center

Dee Strum
National President of the National Coalition of 100 Black Women

Linda Young
Chair of the National Women's Political Caucus