

William E. Kennard

*Federal Agency Focus: Federal Communications Commission
(Introduction)*

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Abstract by Janet C. Goldberg

Two major technological developments that occurred recently include the rapid conversion from analog to digital networks and the rapidly increasing demand for transmission capacity (bandwidth). Under the direction of William Kennard, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) will employ three intertwined principles to ensure that the FCC keeps pace with these technological changes: competition, community, and common sense.

“Competition” refers to reliance on competitive markets driven by customer choice, rather than government regulation. Competitive markets are superior to markets with only a few providers of goods and services because competitive markets are able to adapt more quickly and effectively to changes in technological developments. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 ensures fairness for competitors, which is desirable because it should enable American consumers to receive the most advanced telecommunications services at the greatest value.

“Community” refers to the availability of technology and competition for all consumers - ensuring that all Americans have access to our nation’s telecommunications network of networks. The government can play a vital role in bridging a “Digital Divide” between “haves” and “have-nots,” divided along racial, socioeconomic, and geographic lines. Government involvement needed to eliminate the Digital Divide includes public-private partnerships and consumer protection.

“Common sense” refers to the manner in which a government agency should conduct its business and make decisions, to ensure that competitive markets work (*i.e.*, choosing competition over “heavy-handed” regulation). “Common sense” actions include creating incentive-based programs and establishing relationships with the states and industry participants to develop solutions that benefit everybody.