

Abstract

Leonard M. Baynes

Introduction: Telecommunications Symposium

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In this Introduction to the compendium of articles from the 1999 symposium entitled "Communications Law in the Next Millennium," the author highlights the three critical areas that academics, industry leaders, regulators and practitioners focused on during the conference. Baynes cites (i) competition in the local telephone market; (ii) universal service to all Americans; and (iii) increasing opportunities for broadcast ownership for minorities, as the principal areas in the communications industry requiring discussion and change.

Baynes notes that the 1996 Communications Act ("Act") dramatically altered the scope of local telephone service telephone competition. However, despite the intent of Congress to open local service competition, the author notes that surveys still indicate that customers prefer to use one carrier for local and long distance service. The author then discusses the impact of the 1996 Act on attaining the FCC's goal of universal service for all citizens. Baynes discusses FCC programs aimed at obtaining universal service, particularly for rural and low-income urban residents, as well as Internet hook-ups for more school districts. Finally, the author discusses the status of the FCC's programs to assist minorities in owning broadcast licenses. Baynes concludes that racial stereotypes are perpetuated by the mass media and thus will only end once minorities are granted broadcast ownership opportunities