

## FCC COMMISSIONER WANTS MORE INDEPENDENT TV PRODUCTION Cites Overemphasis on 18- to 34-Year-Old Demographic

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LAS VEGAS (AdAge.com) -- Warning that the "doors of opportunity are fast closing" for independent TV producers, a member of the Federal Communications Commission called on media gatekeepers to set aside a quarter or more of their prime-time hours for such independent work.



Photo: AP

Michael J. Copps is one of five commissioners comprising the FCC and a Democrat who has often clashed with the Bush administration.

Speaking via satellite from Washington to an audience attending the National Association of Television Program Executives in Las Vegas, FCC Commissioner Michael J. Copps said he believed that independent producers were suffering and that viewers lacked diversity in their television programming.

### 'Doors of opportunity'

"Most observers are telling me that the doors of opportunity are fast closing and that we won't have a new generation of Norman Lear and Marcy Carseys and Ted Turners because the opportunities they had are gone," he said.

Mr. Copps said that children, the elderly and minority audiences had been largely left out of the mix because of broadcasters' desire to target the ad-coveted 18- to 34-year-old demographic.

"I'm not here to pick on television," he said, "because I think our media is in crisis across the board."

### Holding broadcasters accountable

Alluding to the fines imposed after the Janet Jackson debacle at the 2004 Super Bowl, Mr. Copps said he believed that broadcasters, not performers, should be held accountable for what appeared on the airwaves.

In the meaty speech, which pulled no punches, the commissioner called for his own agency to act quickly on the issue of media consolidation and clear up industry confusion, rather than wait until 2006. The FCC's chairman, Michael Powell, who is stepping down in March, is expected to decide this week whether to seek further appeals against the Third Circuit Court of Appeals ruling that struck down the FCC's proposed loosening of ownership limits.

Mr. Copps, a Democrat, is one of five commissioners on the FCC. He often voted against Mr. Powell's position on consolidation.

Mr. Copps called for immediate public hearings to begin to understand the viewpoints of the general public. "The media is the people's business, too, and my take is that the people increasingly intend to have a say in how the media develop and how their airwaves are used."

### Time to fight

"Consider this a call to action. Don't tell me now is not the time to fight. Don't say let the courts decide. Don't let the usual suspects inside the Beltway write the rules," said Mr. Copps, adding that people ought to act in advance of the transition to digital TV. "But amidst all the many conversations on the mechanics of the transition, we have yet to decide how DTV is going to enhance the public interest."