



**PRESS STATEMENT
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**STATEMENT BY LOWELL PETERSON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, AND
MICHAEL WINSHIP, PRESIDENT, WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA,
EAST ON PRESIDENT OBAMA'S NOMINATION OF TOM WHEELER AS
NEXT FCC CHAIRMAN**

President Obama has nominated industry veteran Tom Wheeler to replace current Federal Communications Commission Chair Julius Genachowski. Although the Writers Guild of America, East is always skeptical that people can become effective watchdogs over industries they once represented, we are hopeful and note that Mr. Wheeler appears to have a detailed grasp of the technologies that are transforming communications.

Our members are acutely aware that the old ways to distribute information and programming to the public – copper wire for voices and radio frequency airwaves for shows – are being superseded by an increasingly unified digital pipeline, ownership and control of which will have significant ramifications for the general public and for the men and women who create content.

We hope that Mr. Wheeler's understanding of exactly how this technical transformation is playing out will inform his stewardship of the FCC and will enable the agency to take vigorous, informed action to ensure that the full creative and democratic potential of the digital age be realized.

We believe there are certain bedrock principles that should inform Mr. Wheeler as he proceeds through the confirmation process and after he takes office.

The WGAE strongly opposes the theft of copyrighted material via the Internet. At the same time, the WGAE firmly supports the principle of Net Neutrality, and we hope Mr. Wheeler will commit himself to expanding Chairman Genachowski's preliminary efforts to ensure that access to the Internet be robust and open.

Continued consolidation of media ownership also threatens to narrow the national dialogue. Movie studios and television producers take fewer creative risks, and the audience suffers. Fewer news organizations hire fewer journalists, and the public learns less about the critical issues of our times. Increased consolidation of media outlets continues to undermine localism and reduces the diversity of voices presenting news and public-affairs programming.

And the potential for the anti-competitive handling of content is particularly acute when vertically integrated providers of content, applications and services gain significant market share, as was the case in the merger of Comcast with NBC Universal. We hope Mr. Wheeler commits himself to reversing these alarming trends.

About WGAE

The Writers Guild of America, East, AFL-CIO (WGAE) is a labor union representing writers in motion pictures, television, cable, digital media, and broadcast news. The Guild negotiates and administers contracts that protect the creative and economic rights of their members; conduct programs, seminars, and events on issues of interest to writers; and present writers' views to various bodies of government. For more information on the Writers Guild of America, East, visit www.wgaeast.org.