



FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20463

**Remarks of Chair Ann M. Ravel at the
January 15, 2015 Open Meeting of the Federal Election Commission**

This year is the 40th anniversary of the FEC. As we mark this milestone, it's worth remembering that the essential purpose of the FEC has always been to protect our democracy by ensuring a level playing field where everyone in the political process abides by the same set of rules; by providing predictability and clarity to those involved in the political process; and by disclosing who is behind political messages.

The FEC exists to serve the public. But for too long it has been a cloistered agency which hears from certain stakeholders with a direct interest in the Commission's actions, but rarely interacts with the public. In my more than 40 years of law practice, at every level of government, I have learned that it is crucial to listen to experts, business leaders, as well as other people from all walks of life and all perspectives, to make thoughtful policy decisions on behalf of the public. This is particularly important at the FEC because what we do is fundamental to our democracy and has an impact on all people.

What we need are more public voices and more speech at the Commission. To accomplish this:

- I have asked staff members throughout the agency to assess whether what they do to engage stakeholders and the general public has been effective, and to make recommendations about how to improve.
- In the same spirit, I'll continue having public forums, as begun by Commissioner Goodman last year.
- Right now, the public has a one-of-a-kind opportunity to communicate directly with Commissioners to express their views on campaign finance policy. I want to hear what people think about disclosure and other issues. We have received approximately 17,000 written comments so far – a strong indication that people do care about what the FEC does. The deadline for written comments is today, and the public hearing will be on February 11. I encourage people to share their views with the FEC and to sign up to testify in person.

Technology is another priority. Many people know that from the first day I arrived here I saw an agency woefully behind when it comes to technology – both in our own technology as well as in our decision-making process about technologies used in campaigns. We're living in an era of digital currencies, mobile advertising, and on-line fundraising, but the FEC is in the era of microfilm and telegrams.

Technological innovation is changing politics and campaign finance, and we must be informed by listening to experts and gathering views about emerging technologies. Along with

many of my colleagues, I am looking forward to gaining essential insights during a symposium in the Bay Area on February 19th and 20th. This will be an incredible opportunity to hear from leading technologists and scholars about technology's impact on the future of campaigns and civic engagement.

I am also committed to continuing to try to find common ground with my fellow commissioners. Thanks to the great work of Commissioners Goodman and Hunter, the Citizens United/McCutcheon rulemaking showed that compromise is possible. I hope we can build on those efforts and work together to move the agency forward to provide stakeholders and the public with clear guidance about how to comply with the law.

And, this year I will prioritize improving communication with our staff. Vice Chair Petersen and I will have a series of meetings throughout the year to increase information given to staff, and to hear what they think. Each and every employee of this agency provides an incredibly important public service and makes a valuable contribution. We need to remember that the work we do has enormous significance. It really matters.

I look forward to working with you all this year.

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