

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

<http://accesshumboldt.net/site/statement-us-election-2016>

Statement of Access Humboldt executive director Sean McLaughlin
Regarding US Election 2016

Access Humboldt's mission to support "Local voices through community media" is accomplished through US laws and regulations that implement public policies made in the Nation's Capitol. So, even though Access Humboldt is a community-based organization focused on Humboldt County and the North Coast region of California, the outcomes of the US election and decisions made in Washington DC have profound implications for our work.

Beyond potential legislative outcomes in Congress, Federal agencies including the Departments of Commerce (NTIA) and Agriculture (RUS) have essential roles to play -- none more important than the Federal Communications Commission which operates as an independent agency. The majority of the five member FCC is determined by the President's selection of Chair, subject to Senate approval, with agenda setting authority and limited Congressional oversight.

While the principles of universal access, diversity, and equity -- the building blocks for freedom of information and free expression -- are not partisan, many of the FCC actions that Access Humboldt has applauded over recent years were decided on 3-2 votes, along partisan lines.

Important FCC policies reformed in the past few years include: Open Internet, Consumer Protection, Broadband Privacy, and Universal Service reforms such as the Connect America Fund for high-cost rural areas, E-Rate for Schools and Libraries, and Lifeline for low-income folks. Sadly, we anticipate substantial undermining of these public interest reforms, causing potentially catastrophic erosion of the foundations for the social contract between private communications/media utilities and the communities they are meant to serve.

Results of the 2016 US Election demand that we renew our call to honor the social contract between private interests of corporate shareholders and the public -- to effectively support localism, diversity and competition across media and technology platforms.

Community media are a local resource, based in the communities we serve, focused on local needs and interests. Access Humboldt provides safe places both real and virtual for people of all ages and backgrounds to be heard. All community members, including natives, immigrants, people with disabilities, and the most vulnerable in our communities have access to media that can empower and transform people's lives, promoting inclusion, diversity and mutual respect.

By providing open platforms for difficult discussions on social issues and for reflection on controversial issues of public importance, we build understanding and cultural awareness and stand up for all the members of the communities we serve - no matter whether, or how they voted. At Access Humboldt, we plan to redouble our efforts to improve communication and understanding among all the citizens of our county, and we need all the help we can get. US Election 2016 is done, now back to work.

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Access Humboldt is a non-profit, community media organization formed in April 2006 to manage local cable franchise benefits on behalf of the County of Humboldt, California and the Cities of Eureka, Arcata, Fortuna, Rio Dell, Ferndale and Blue Lake.

Community media resources of Access Humboldt include: cable access TV channels; a wide area broadband network with dedicated optic fiber connections to twenty locations serving local jurisdictions, educational institutions and other public facilities; broadband access wireless networks; a Community Media Center with studio and other production equipment and training on the Eureka High School campus; a low power FM radio station (KZZH-FM96.7), and ongoing operational support for public, educational and governmental access media services from franchised cable operators in Humboldt County.

Access Humboldt's Board of Directors convenes regular public meetings, provides local accountability and sets governing policy to guide the organization.

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"Local Voices Through Community Media"

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