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# Hudson Institute

Robert M. McDowell

*Senior Fellow*



## Areas of Expertise

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Regulation Wireless Communication  
Broadband Spectrum Policy Innovation

**Hudson Senior Fellow Robert McDowell** specializes in telecommunications policy. He previously served nearly seven years on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), appointed by President George W. Bush in 2006, reappointed by President Barack Obama in 2009, and unanimously confirmed by the U.S. Senate each time. His second nomination in 2009 made him the first Republican appointed to an independent agency by President Obama. Prior to joining the FCC, he worked in senior positions in the telecommunications industry for 16 years. His strategic vision combined with his business, legal and political acumen have made him a highly effective leader with proven results.

McDowell has also been an official member of U.S. diplomatic delegations working on treaty negotiations and international conferences governing global spectrum and telecom policies. At the FCC and elsewhere, he consistently and methodically worked to forge

bipartisan consensus in adopting policies to promote economic expansion, investment, innovation, competition and consumer choice. *The Washington Post* called him “an independent force at the FCC,” while BROADCASTING & CABLE magazine described his tenure as “statesmanlike.” His accomplishments include:

- Leading efforts to put more of the airwaves into the hands of American consumers through the auction of exclusive use licenses previously used for television as well as unlicensed use of various frequencies including the TV “white spaces” and the 5 GHz band. As a veteran of the two largest wireless auctions in U.S. history, he worked for the FCC to adopt “flexible use” policies to maximize freedom for entrepreneurs and innovators.
- Launching the campaign to rally international opposition against efforts by China, Russia, Iran, Saudi Arabia and other countries to regulate the economics, operations and content of the Internet through the International Telecommunication Union. Seeing the need to employ a new geopolitical strategy, McDowell’s seminal 2012 opinion-editorial in the Wall Street Journal sparked the creation of an international coalition to combat multilateral Internet regulation. Among other things, his work resulted in legislation being adopted unanimously by the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate in 2012.
- Working from a 1-to-3 partisan disadvantage to bridge the divide, to negotiate and successfully secure the first federal entitlement reform in a generation through an overhaul of the FCC’s \$8 billion per year Universal Service subsidy program. Reform of this complex program had eluded previous FCCs under both Republican and Democratic administrations.

- Helping lead the massive 2009 digital television transition to a successful end as one of only three FCC commissioners.
- Leading an effort to establish a ban on discriminatory practices in broadcast advertising resulting in the adoption of the first federal civil rights rule in a generation.
- Reviving stalled proceedings to allocate spectrum for wireless medical technologies such as those that allow victims of paralysis to regain use of their limbs.
- Playing an integral role in the outcome of countless large corporate transactions including those involving satellite, media and wireless companies.

Immediately prior to joining the FCC, McDowell was senior vice president for the Competitive Telecommunications Association (CompTel), an association representing competitive facilities-based telecommunications service providers and their supplier partners. There he led advocacy efforts before Congress, the White House and executive agencies. He has also served on the North American Numbering Council (NANC) and on the board of directors of North American Numbering Plan Billing and Collection, Inc. (NBANC).

Prior to joining CompTel in February 1999, McDowell served as the executive vice president and general counsel of America's Carriers Telecommunications Association (ACTA), which merged with CompTel at that time.

McDowell graduated cum laude from Duke University in 1985. After serving as chief legislative aide to a member of the Virginia House of Delegates, he attended the College of William and Mary's Marshall-Wythe School of Law. Upon his graduation from law school, McDowell

joined the Washington, D.C., office of the national law firm of Arter & Hadden.

His involvement in civic and political affairs spans four decades. He was appointed by the Governor of Virginia to the Governor's Advisory Board for a Safe and Drug-Free Virginia, and to the Virginia Board for Contractors, the Commonwealth's largest regulatory board, where he served for eight years. A veteran of several presidential campaigns, his work during the 1992 election cycle is cited in the Almanac of American Politics, 1994. Among many other endeavors, McDowell has twice been a candidate for the Virginia General Assembly. He currently serves on the Shared Spectrum Company's Board of Directors, The Potomac School's Board of Trustees and Duke University Sanford School of Public Policy's Board of Visitors. He also is a former Chairman of the Board of the McLean Project for the Arts, which strives to connect emerging artists with communities in the Washington region.

McDowell has published numerous articles and opinion-editorials. He is a frequent public speaker and often appears on television and radio. He has received several awards in recognition of his service on the FCC. He is admitted to practice law before the U.S. Supreme Court, the courts of the Commonwealth of Virginia, the U.S. Courts of Appeals for the District of Columbia, First, Fourth and Fifth Circuits, and the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia. He is a partner at Cooley LLP where he is co-leader of its global communications practice group.



Promoting American leadership and global engagement for a secure, free, and prosperous future.