



California Western student recommendations adopted by FCC committee

New Media Rights interns help draft key proposals to benefit consumers

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Marko Radisavljevic -- a student at California Western School of Law, and Kyle C. Welch -- a 2014 California Western graduate, recently contributed to the work of the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) Consumer Advisor Committee as legal interns with California Western's New Media Rights clinic.

New Media Rights is a nonprofit program at California Western that provides legal services, education, and advocacy for Internet users and creators. Through the law school's Clinical Internship Program, students work side-by-side with practicing attorneys, producing real legal work.

In March, the FCC committee approved an important recommendation to modernize and improve the way high-speed Internet is brought to classrooms and libraries around the country through the E-Rate program. Radisavljevic and Welch, along with New Media Rights Executive Director Art Neill, were directly involved in the research, drafting, and proposal of this recommendation.

The consumer committee also recently approved recommendations that Radisavljevic and Neill researched and helped to draft that would create a searchable online database to enable the public to view consumer complaints filed with the FCC — a system and level of transparency that doesn't exist in the FCC today.

The FCC receives hundreds of thousands of consumer complaints about wireless service, television and radio program content, and other issues regulated by the agency. What happens to the data collected on these complaints? How, if at all, is the FCC limited by regulation in its ability to release consumer complaint data? How does the FCC's approach compare with other federal and state regulatory agencies? What would more transparent consumer complaint data reporting look like?

Those are among the questions Radisavljevic investigated in his research. As it turns out, citizens can't find out much.

"If you go to the FCC website and want to find information on consumer complaints you really won't find any useful information," says Radisavljevic. "A lot of complaints that come in are for content on TV shows and radio programs. However, what if I have an issue with a wireless phone company's billing practices and I want to know if other people are having the same issue — especially other people in my zip code? The current reporting process does not allow you to figure this out. Our recommendation to the FCC was to give consumers the access to the complaint information in a machine-readable format that they can sort through and organize using a variety of tools."

"Marko and Kyle each did a fantastic job helping craft two recommendations that provide critical guidance to the FCC as it tries to regulate communications in the 21st century," said Neill. "Through this work, they've had an opportunity to go beyond understanding and applying the law and actually shape the law and policy priorities based on direct observation and extensive research, another critical role of the modern lawyer."

Submitted by California Western School of Law