

MEDIA MENTION

Dick Wiley Profiled as ‘Father of HDTV’ on 25th Anniversary of the New Digital Standard

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Richard E. Wiley, name partner of Wiley Rein, was profiled in *Arlington Magazine’s* July/August issue for the critical role he played in ushering in the high-definition television (HDTV) revolution. A longtime resident of Arlington, Virginia, Mr. Wiley is widely known as the “Father of HDTV.” He served as Chairman, Commissioner, and General Counsel of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) from 1970 to 1977, and later co-founded Wiley Rein, leading its preeminent communications practice.

The feature story describes the history and pivotal developments that led to the creation of HDTV:

- In the 1980s, FCC officials and Congress became concerned that the United States would lag behind Japan and Western Europe in developing a new standard for the advent of high-definition television.
- In 1987, Mr. Wiley was asked to head up an FCC advisory committee to study the issue and come up with a successful plan.
- The project involved about 1,000 engineers, policy experts, and others who contributed to the effort.
- After intense competition to choose a prototype system, Mr. Wiley floated the idea of a “grand alliance,” in which competitors – including such giants as Zenith, AT&T, Philips, RCA, and General Instrument – would work together to create one digital standard.
- In 1996, the FCC endorsed the committee’s plan, and HDTV-compliant sets went on sale a short time later.

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Practice Areas

Telecom, Media & Technology

- It wasn't long after the plan was approved, and production had begun on televisions boasting the new digital standard, that Mr. Wiley received an Emmy Award for leading the effort.

According to Mark Richer – who was in charge of systems evaluation and testing proposals for the committee – the “grand alliance” succeeded because Mr. Wiley is a “master of negotiation and compromise, and has extraordinarily good political skills.”

“He was able to sit down with the CEOs of those companies and convince them that was the right way to go,” Mr. Richer said.

Mr. Wiley recalled that during the committee's early days, he dreamed of someday seeing large-screen televisions hanging on the walls of homes and buildings. “High-definition TV was the holy grail for me,” Mr. Wiley said. “It was the most interesting and rewarding thing I was ever involved with.”