

# Former Nixon telecommunications head dies

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Former Nixon administration telecommunications guru Clay T. Whitehead has died of prostate cancer in Washington at the age of 69.

Whitehead was perhaps best known for his role in creating the Open Skies policy as director of the White House Office of Telecommunications Policy from 1970 to 1974. His efforts helped lead to a domestic satellite system bringing cable TV systems and reduced-cost long-distance telephone service for millions of Americans.

He was also known for his often controversial attitudes toward media coverage of the Nixon administration, which he referred to in a 1972 speech as “elitist gossip” and “ideological plugola,” The New York Times reported Thursday.

Others, including Thomas Hazlett, a professor of economics and law at George Mason University, emphasize Whitehead's larger role which “spearheaded a deregulatory movement that brought much more liberal rules and far stronger First Amendment protection to the emerging media... . The effect of allowing the new information services to compete in a more open environment set the stage for progress in the technologies to come, including the Internet and cellular.”

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