

Re: #17-179 Merger of Sinclair and Tribune

To Whom It May Concern,

I vehemently oppose any merger between Tribune and Sinclair. To paraphrase from a recent Bill Moyers article, "Once upon a time, the FCC had the Fairness Doctrine. This rule insisted that because the airwaves belong to all of us, every TV and radio broadcast licensee must "devote a reasonable portion of broadcast time to the discussion and consideration of controversial issues of public importance," and allow "the expression of contrasting viewpoints."

Had the Fairness Doctrine remained in place, chances are the explosion of loud-mouthed bigotry on the air and across the internet might have been mitigated in part by a more balanced, countervailing progressive radio and TV to tell all sides of the story.

That was the rule, but it didn't sit well with conservatives and in 1987, during the latter part of the reign of Ronald Reagan, the Fairness Doctrine was revoked. The disappearance helped encourage the rise of right wing, hate talk radio and the incubator it provided for the likes of Fox News, Alex Jones and Breitbart.

Had the Fairness Doctrine remained in place, chances are the explosion of loud-mouthed bigotry on the air and across the internet might have been mitigated in part by a more balanced, countervailing progressive radio and TV to tell all sides of the story. But the Fairness Doctrine is gone for good; there's little or no chance it ever will be reinstated.

That's because, as we've seen, many rules are meant to be broken, especially if you're part of a Republican Party that believes government rules should be stomped into the ground and eliminated. Rules keep corporate America from getting its way, from allowing it to run unfettered and unregulated, and must be abolished.

Unless.... Sometimes there's a government rule that the right wing actually likes. Sometimes, in fact, there's even an old rule that you bring back; one that could do your big-business buddies some good.

That's what happened recently when the FCC, now chaired by Republican Ajit Pai, decided to reinstate a rule that was eliminated by Pai's predecessor. **Turns out that it can come in very handy when helping friends achieve a merger that will create a powerful media behemoth dedicated to propagating a right-wing, pro-Trump worldview while raising consumer prices, eliminating independence and diversity and stifling community news coverage.**

The Sinclair Broadcast Group, which already owns 173 TV stations in the United States, more than anyone else in the United States, proposes to buy Tribune Media for \$3.9 billion, making Sinclair even bigger. Although it claims to present a wide range of viewpoints in its news and public affairs coverage, Sinclair is a company that's not shy about its conservative bias.

It is, in the words of former FCC commissioner Michael Copps, “the most dangerous company most Americans haven’t heard of... No one company should have such power over the news and information that citizens must have.”

Enough said,

Kristin Cook
9408 Jongroner Court
Potomac, MD 20854