Regarding proceeding MB 17-179, I urge the FCC to deny Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc.'s bid to become a broadcasting powerhouse by purchasing Tribune Media Company. This merger would create the largest television broadcasting company in history with access to over 70 percent of American homes. But, the merger hinges on spinning off TV stations to comply with U.S. limits on broadcast ownership. Bloomberg news reported on July 2 that Sinclair's station spinoffs as a condition of the proposed merger do not even pass the smell test of a true, arms-length divestiture of an independent broadcast station. For example, the flagship Tribune station in my hometown of Chicago, WGN-TV, would be sold to an automobile executive who is a business partner of Sinclair Chairman David D. Smith! The sale includes a convenient option for Sinclair to buy WGN-TV back after eight years -- renewable five times for up to 48 years. Simply put, Sinclair would maintain de-facto control over this and other major-market stations (e.g., KDAF in Dallas and KIAH in Houston) through its web of family-connected business partners.

I object to the merger for a second reason: Sinclair Broadcast Group has a long, ugly history of laying off local news staff with a commitment to local journalism and community affairs. Sinclair then devastates the journalistic integrity of local media outlets by forcing its member stations to air politically-biased "must-run" segments as unbiased news reports, not the opinion-laden palaver such pieces are. These must-run segments are produced by Sinclair's corporate headquarters in Baltimore. We must protect quality journalism that reflects the concerns and interests of the communities served by local news stations.

I urge you to flatly reject the Sinclair-Tribune merger on both counts.