

I support media diversity

There is no question that the increase in monopolization of media ownership by a few ultra-conservative corporations has resulted in an incredible decline in access to information for the American people. When visiting Spain last summer, I was able to get more information reading Spanish newspapers (a language in which I am not fluent) than I was able to get from U.S. media when I returned to the States. The people that have seized control of our government and media are clearly trying to create a brave new world where "War is peace". Both sides in the Iraqi conflict have attacked journalists, an indication that they do not want full, accurate information about the war reaching the outside world. Both the print media and broadcast media have essentially abdicated their responsibility to research information fed them by government agencies. Such investigation is apparently too costly and might adversely affect the bottom line for the corporations that own them. When attempts are made to write analysis, they are very one-sided and homogenized and appear in a whole string of outlets, thereby reducing the richness of outlook that is obtained when multiple views are aired. The goal is apparently to not offend potential readers/viewers (read "market share") rather than illuminating events.

I am writing to you today to comment on Docket No. 02-277, The Biennial Review of the FCC's broadcast media ownership rules. In its goals to promote competition, diversity and localism in today's media market, I strongly believe that the FCC should retain all of the current media ownership rules now in question. These rules serve the public interest by limiting the market power of already huge companies in the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate the negative affects media deregulation and consolidation have had on media diversity. While there may be indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented has become more limited.

The right to carry on informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was best served by a diverse marketplace of ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge, our ability to have open, informed discussion with a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

The public interest will best be served by preserving media ownership rules in question in this proceeding.

In addition to the official hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA, I strongly urge the FCC to hold additional hearings elsewhere around the nation to solicit the widest possible participation from the public which will be the most directly affected by the outcomes of these decisions. I think it is important for the FCC to not only consider the points of view of those with a financial interest in this issue, but also those with a social or civic interest.

With the serious impact these rule changes will have on our democracy, it is incumbent on the Commission to take the time to review these issues more thoroughly and allow the American people to have a meaningful say in the process.

Thank you,

Keith A. Steffen