

I oppose media concentration and please undue telcom 96

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 promoting its supposed goals of fair competition, diversity and local voice 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 the huge, dominant companies and players in the broadcast industry.

I do not believe that the studies commissioned by the FCC accurately demonstrate, or even attempt to demonstrate, the negative effects that media deregulation and consolidation have had on the diversity of our media. While there may indeed be more sources of media than ever before, the spectrum of views presented has been severely limited.

The right to conduct an informed debate and discussion of current events is part of the founding philosophy of our nation. Our forefathers believed that democracy was renewed in the marketplace of diverse ideas. If the FCC allows our media outlets to merge and consolidate further, our ability to have an open, informed discussion from a wide variety of viewpoints will be compromised.

I urge the FCC to preserve the public interest by keeping the media ownership rules in question intact.

Also, I support the FCC's plan to hold a public hearing on this matter in Richmond, VA in February of 2003. I strongly encourage the Commission to hold similar hearings in all parts of the country and solicit the widest possible participation from the public. The rarified, lawyerly atmosphere of an FCC rulemaking is not an appropriate decision-making venue when questions as profound as the freedom of our media are at stake. I encourage the Commissioners to come out and meet some of the people who do not have a financial interest in this issue, but a social interest.

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

April 26, 2003

FCC Public Hearing on Media Consolidation and Ownership

Thank you for allowing me to speak today
about how Media Ownership and Consolidation
has affected the labor workforce in the broadcast industry.

I am a radio engineer from Modesto California

I am here today to share with you my experience with media consolidation

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Prior to 1996, there were at least a dozen fully staffed radio stations

with independent owners in the Modesto market.

This allowed for several full time on air personalities,
at least one Chief engineer

and many support and office staff to make a living at each
and every radio station,

Since the telecommunication act of 1996,

there are only two main corporations, who control those dozen radio
stations,

and the staff of one station pre Telcom 96

must now runs 5 6 or 8 stations.

Once the larger corporations were allowed to increase

the number of radio stations they could legal own and operate from one
location

they began consolidating officespace and staff

This meant elimination of many full time jobs,

and those who were kept on staff were made to work harder
and longer without compensation for the increase in responsibility.

People would put in overtime hours to cover the cut backs in staff,
yet they would not be fairly paid for it.

On air talent was finding it much harder to get work in the area
and even adjacent markets, when there are only two companies
owning the majority of broadcast stations.

You see After your station was bought out by Citadel or Clear Channel,
you were likely to be layed off

And because of consolidation there were less and less options
for jobs within the radio industry .

Since Clear Channel and other large broadcasters
began buying up what were once

local and independent Radio stations all over the country,

its now very hard to find a job in radio

without having to work for Cheap Channel ,

that is if they even had any new job openings.

Typicaly these newly corporatized stations employe a salery and hiriing freez .

I had been working for more then a decade as a radio engineer for a large Modesto station

And also at the same time as a engineer at another group of stations ,

then those two companies were bought-out

by whats now known as Clear Channel

no longer was I working for two companys that competeted for my tecnecal services

I found myself working more hours for less pay

and more importantly for only one company that had planed all along to build out there 6 station cluster with the companys own audio automation system.

Weather it was y2k complant or not.

I kept very busy working for few years after telcom 96

breaking down long time local stations

and moving them into the corporate buildings...

maybe everyone else was busy to ,

to busy to ask why we built 5 stations in one building with out any newsrooms.

Soon after the construction of this radio cluster was completed

I was told my job was to be cut to part-time

Or clear channel would give me one full week of servence pay if wanted to

quit.

then I was illegally terminated over a private Email

I had written from my home computer regarding the illegal activities Clear Channel

perpetrates on their own employees

such as a policy against paying overtime as required by state law,

equal opportunity employment issues

employing underage children for dangerous antenna tower work

numerous technical as well as OSHA safety violations

and recurring sexual harassment in the workplace.

I currently have a wrongful termination case against Clear Channel,

I have won two other lawsuits against Clear Channel in regards to Overtime Pay and Workman's Comp.

I am here today to speak for the victims of the mega-corporate broadcast industry.

My wife was a disc jockey, news reporter and public affairs director.

She was laid off and can not work in this market due to the consolidation.

She is not the only victim of this industry.

This McRadio is clearly a nationwide media crisis.

There are countless numbers of talented radio people

who are unable to get re-hired due to the stranglehold

corporations like Clear Channel have on the local radio markets.

I urge you to reconsider the Telecommunications Act of 96,

and to consider all the jobs that were eliminated

when multiple ownership limits were lifted.

If Clear Channel has over 1200 stations this may represent as many as 10,000 layoffs

We know Clear Channel laid off 600 workers in June alone last year!

What's more, we know that each time a DJ is laid off

Local access to the public's airways is equally diminished

Radio used to have a fairly high turnover rate, but now automation and non-local programming

fed by satellite and computer networks means little or no opportunity

for local DJ's and Engineers to develop their talents

many of those still working in the business play dirty pool

or more likely wave the flag to keep their jobs and feed their families..

Squelching diversification and promoting cookie cutter radio is not in the public's interest

Breaking labor laws and not paying overtime to employees is criminal behavior

It should also be noted that three people, including two children were killed in North Carolina while working on a 1,500 foot tall radio tower belonging to WFMX(FM) a Clear Channel station

Please do not consider further consolidation

of the media or mandatory digital audio broadcasting.

I also believe the commission should require cable tv providers

to carry any and all local broadcast

That provide the 3 hours or more a week of local programming,

My home town , , , , Modesto , is a area with out any community minded radio stations

we have been fighting With AT&T and now comcast , cable

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who refuse , , , , to allow the Modesto low power community tv station , , , access to Modesto's cable TV system.

How can any person town or city access the airways

when they are under-regulated, under corporate control and sold to the highest bidder??

Thank You

Brad Johnson
Radio Engineer

