

I want to convey my very deep concern and opposition to the proposal to roll back the current rules restricting media consolidation and relaxing cross-media ownership. I also am very disappointed with the lack of openness on this issue and specifically that the proposed wording of the rule change has not been made public. How ironic that such an important issue with significant implications for the future of media in this country has not reached network news and many cable channels. Who has a stake in preventing extensive discussion of this issue? Why could it possibly be a good thing for the few corporations who currently control information and programming to the vast majority of U.S. households to acquire more and more channels, networks and even newspapers?. Do you think the trends of the past several years that have led to significant loss of diverse viewpoints and local control aren't going to continue at even greater speed? New technologies have not added diversity of viewpoints; they have not enhanced programming in the public interest, and these newer technologies should not be used as a rationale for less regulation of those given control of the public airwaves. Access to more networks, more means of distributing information, and more entertainment sources does not automatically lead to diversity of content or viewpoint, especially if fewer and fewer owners control those sources. The fact remains that networks are a primary source of information for a large segment of the population--sometimes for critical life-saving information at the local level. Is that priority in your current deliberations?

What has occurred in the few years since the 1996 regulatory changes to radio is a cautionary tale that I hope you will seriously consider. That decision has been a complete disaster for locally owned independent radio stations. As a result, one corporation has virtually eliminated diversity of viewpoint and programming in many cities and towns across America. Isn't it likely that the same will occur with other media when and if existing regulations are abandoned? I can no longer stand to listen to commercial radio, and I fear that network TV and Cable and will be led down the same path of mediocrity, and more importantly, pay less attention public service priorities as you turn away from the FCC's original mandate to serve the public interest. The only proper balance between public and private interests is to be achieved in this instance through reasonable oversight, especially where the very basic constitutional values of a free and open media are at stake. Please carefully reconsider your positions on this very significant and fundamental change to public policy and vote to retain the current rule.

Thank you,  
Barbara Boysen