

The proposal to relax or even eliminate the limits that clearly are in the public interest regarding media consolidation is a very bad idea. Localism and diversity are foundational to ensuring we have a democratic media system. We cannot afford to allow them to be compromised.

Media ownership clearly matters. During the 2004 election Sinclair Broadcasting required its stations to air a slanted "documentary" about John Kerry And now a major scandal has erupted over ABC's "docudrama" on the 9/11 attacks. In it Walt Disney corporation willfully distorts the history of this recent national tragedy for political gain. It puts words in the mouths of actors portraying real historical figures currently very much alive that are simply not true and cast them in a very negative light not warranted by the historical record.

We need local, independent broadcast station owners who will serve the public interest in truth, not the financial interests of faraway corporate owners. Honest and careful stewardship of the airwaves is a very serious responsibility and a sacred trust. It merits real public accountability.

Limits on media consolidation have been a critical safeguard against the consolidation of economic power which threatens the free flow of information in the marketplace of ideas that democracy depends upon. Democracy depends on a free exchange of information from a broad range of diverse voices.

Already too much consolidation has occurred, bringing about the virtual elimination of some voices in our society, such as that of organized labor. The decline in airtime for labor voices has been far more drastic than their numbers in the population make probable, which leads me to conclude that anti-labor media corporations are the root of that trend. In the economic recession of the first half of the decade, almost none of the people whose lives were being affected by the downturn had their stories told in the media. Ignoring that part of the economic story distorts the reality of what is happening in our country.

The media consolidation that has already occurred and has led to declines in local programming, minority ownership, and the homogenization of content in radio and television. Allowing even more 'cross ownership' of newspapers and broadcasting stations or allowing more consolidation within the same market, will greatly increase the problem.

In early summer 2003, Americans across the political spectrum rose up and spoke out about the FCC's attempt to weaken and remove media ownership limits. Congress and the courts eventually intervened to turn back those attempts.

Now that the same rules are being reconsidered, we need the FCC to protect the public interest and stand firm against further media consolidation. In protecting the public interest you will be protecting

democracy.