

Sandralyn Bailey

05-171

From: plumeria56 [plumeria56@charter.net]
Sent: Thursday, November 16, 2006 1:19 AM
To: KJMWEB
Subject: Stop Fake News

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DEC - 7 2006

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

For a second time this year, the Center for Media and Democracy and Free Press have exposed dozens of local television stations that air promotional corporate "video news releases" as real news.

Overwhelmingly, the stations in question failed to identify the corporate sponsors as the source of the material. This deception violates FCC's sponsorship identification rules and broadcasters' responsibility to serve the public.

After being exposed in April 2006, station owners claimed that they would police themselves to stop this abuse of the public airwaves. But the more recent revelation shows that they have done little to stop this practice.

The FCC must continue its investigation, clarify disclosure requirements and penalize all stations that air fake news. Review for compliance as frequently as needed until problem is remedied.

If the corporate ownership is not funding stations adequately, address that matter. Require that a percentage of profits be allocated to allow stations to provide accurate and varied local, national, and international news. Provide stations with access to media sources, and charge a fee to the monopolistic ownership. If they're not complying with high news standards, find out what the problem is. Help the independents, and insist that the big guys pay their own way. Keep the news real.

Please act immediately to stop fake news.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Beth Gerl
Lincoln City, OR 97367

Sandralyn Bailey

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05-17-1

DEC - 7 2006

From: Frannie Wellings [fwellings@freepress.net]
Sent: Wednesday, November 15, 2006 6:43 PM
To: Kevin Martin; Jonathan Adelstein; Michael Copps; Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary Deborah Tate; Robert McDowell
Cc: Donna Gregg; Kris Monteith
Subject: CMD-Free Press Complaint and Request for Further Investigation of VNR's



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November 15, 2006

Dear Mr. Chairman and Commissioners:

The purpose of this letter is to file a formal complaint requesting an investigation into new incidents of television stations airing "video news releases" (VNRs) without disclosure. The widespread and undisclosed use of VNRs represents a serious, ongoing crisis in our broadcast news media.

Center for Media and Democracy will follow this letter with a copy of their latest study, "Still Not the News: Stations Overwhelmingly Fail to Disclose VNRs," which documents 46 TV stations airing corporate VNRs -- sponsored segments produced to mimic independent news reports.¹ The report and all of the video evidence is also available in its entirety at www.stopfakenews.org

On April 5, 2006, we delivered the first part of this research, "Fake TV News: Widespread and Undisclosed," which documents use of an additional 36 VNRs by 77 television stations. ²

On April 6, 2006, Free Press and CMD filed a complaint calling on the agency to "clarify and enforce its sponsorship identification rules,³ and strongly penalize stations that air fake news."⁴

In the nearly seven months since we filed the first complaint, tens of thousands of Americans have written letters to the agency urging a thorough investigation of the widespread abuse.⁵

We were pleased that the Commission had sent letters of inquiry on August 11, 2006 to the broadcasters identified in the first CMD report, calling on them to provide evidence regarding their undisclosed use of VNRs.⁶

We urge the FCC to pursue this investigation to the fullest extent. Furthermore, we urge the agency to launch a new investigation of those stations identified in the latest report and to strengthen disclosure requirements for fake TV news.

Our research indicates that the broadcast of undisclosed fake news continues unabated, despite the Commission's actions and broadcasters own attempts to police themselves.

The latest CMD report documents:

- VNR use by 46 TV stations in 22 states, including major markets (New York, Boston, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Philadelphia, Miami, Minneapolis) broadcasting 33 different VNRs.
- Only two stations provided clear disclosure of the VNR material they broadcast – KYW-3 (Philadelphia, PA) and WCPO-9 (Cincinnati, OH). Both were also cited in CMD's first report.
- Seven other stations named in CMD's first report subsequently aired VNRs, without any disclosure: WBRZ-2 (Baton Rouge, LA), WDAF-4 (Kansas City, MO), WCTI-12 (New Bern, NC), WPIX-11 (New York, NY), WSYX-6 (Columbus, OH), WYTV-33 (Youngstown, OH), and KLBK-13 (Lubbock, TX). One previously-cited station, NY1 (New York, NY), offered fleeting, ambiguous disclosure of its more recent VNR usage.
- Two other stations – KGTV-10 (San Diego, CA) and WDTN-2 (Dayton, OH) – offered fleeting, ambiguous disclosure of recent VNR broadcasts.
- Collectively, the local TV stations named in the new report broadcast to nearly 40% of the U.S. population.
- 37 VNR broadcasts featured in the second CMD investigation occurred after the FCC launched its own investigation on August 11.

Between the two reports, CMD has recorded 140 VNR broadcasts. Clear sponsorship disclosure information occurred in only two out of the 140 VNRs documented (or 1.4%).

The "fake news" captured over the two reports was aired in 36 states, including broadcasters in the nation's 10 largest markets. The stations implicated in the report reach well over half of the U.S. viewing population.

Still, the cumulative findings of these reports represent only a small sample – less than 1 percent – of the thousands of VNRs the PR industry produces each year for broadcast on television news programs.

Free Press and CMD believe that undisclosed VNRs have compromised local news programming in every market. The integrity of broadcast journalism remains at risk until TV stations stop airing fake news.

It is apparent that the Commission needs to expand its investigation into these abuses and clarify to broadcasters their responsibilities under FCC rules and the terms of their licenses.

As cited in the Commission's April 2005 Public Notice, whenever stations air VNRs, licensees" must clearly disclose to members of their audiences the nature, source and sponsorship of the material that they are viewing."7

A broadcaster's failure to fully disclose that a news story contains material that was provided to them by a commercial or governmental source is a violation of existing regulations. Listeners and viewers are entitled to know who seeks to persuade them with programming offered over the public airwaves.

As per our recommendations in the prior complaint, federal regulators should intervene to tighten the rules and prevent future abuses. As part of this effort, Free Press and CMD recommend that:

- All broadcast of provided and/or sponsored video footage be required to carry a continuous, frame-by-frame visual notification of its source.
- All broadcast of provided and/or sponsored audio material be required to include a verbal notification at its beginning and/or end, disclosing its source.
- Broadcasters be required to place in their public file a monthly report on their use of all provided and/or sponsored material.

It is time regulators got to the bottom of this practice, identified violators, clarified disclosure requirements and improved the effectiveness of the rules and the thoroughness of their enforcement.

We urge the Commission to make this issue a priority and swiftly investigated these and all other VNR abuses to help restore the public trust in the integrity of local news.

05-171

Sincerely,

Timothy Karr

Campaign Director

Free Press

Diane Farsetta

Senior Researcher

Center for Media and Democracy

Cc:

Donna Gregg

Kris Monteith

1 Diane Farsetta and Daniel Price. "Still Not the News: Stations Overwhelmingly Fail to Disclose VNRs," 14 November 2006, Center for Media and Democracy, <http://www.prwatch.org/fakenews2/execsummary>.

2 Diane Farsetta and Daniel Price. "Fake TV News: Widespread and Undisclosed," 6 April 2006, Center for Media and Democracy, <http://www.prwatch.org/fakenews/execsummary>.

3 See, e.g., Applicability of Sponsorship Identification Rules, Public Notice, 40 FCC 141 (1963); Sponsorship Identification Rules, Applicability, 40 FR 41936 (1975); 47 U.S.C. §§ 317, 508 and 47 C.F.R. §§ 73.1212, 76.1615.

4 Free Press and CMD Complaint to the FCC. April 6, 2006, http://www.freepress.net/docs/fcc_complaint_4-06-06.pdf

5 No Fake News Campaign, <http://www.freepress.net/fakenews/>.

6 Free Press and CMD Complaint to the FCC. April 6, 2006

7 FCC Public Notice, 13 April 2005.

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* * *

Frannie Wellings

Government Relations Manager

Free Press

202.265.1490 x 21

www.freepress.net

Media Reform Meets in Memphis

Join us at the National Conference for Media Reform!

January 12-14, 2007

www.freepress.net/conference

Sandra Lyn Bailey

05-1171

From: Joe Fewell [joe.fewell@comcast.net]
Sent: Tuesday, November 14, 2006 3:05 PM
To: KJMWEB
Subject: Comments to the Chairman

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DEC - 7 2006

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary

Joe Fewell (joe.fewell@comcast.net) writes:

Chairman Martin,
Hello, I wanted to drop a line and ask what the FCC plans to do about this--A new CMD report, titled "Still Not the News: Stations Overwhelmingly Fail to Disclose VNRs," documents 46 TV stations that aired corporate video news releases, or VNRs - sponsored segments produced to mimic independent news reports. I believe that you have a responsibility to correct this behavior by denying these organization's license renewals. They don't serve the public interests (using VNR's) they don't care about the content they put on--evidenced by the repetitive airing of Married with Children, although they change the name, for each "new" show, it's the same crap schilled out to an undereducated and under informed populous, and they certainly don't care about investigative journalism. If the FCC is going to give these organizations, which care about as much about the public interest as Mike Tyson cares about ear hygiene, then I think it is time the FCC charged a premium for the license to broadcast. A premium that cannot be passed through to the public! Moreover, I have taken note that in my Comcast cable bill they are passing through a fee from the FCC onto its clients. What is that about? If they are given the license for free, why are they passing their costs through to us? The whole market structure is just a big F'***ing joke on the middle class and people too poor to afford Tivo. It has to change. Maybe you're the person for the job, or maybe you are just another enabler dividing and scheming over the publics' interest?

Server protocol: HTTP/1.1
Remote host: 68.52.189.169
Remote IP address: 68.52.189.169



November 14, 2006

Chairman Kevin J. Martin
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Commissioner Deborah Tate
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Commissioner Robert McDowell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

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