

The California Chicano News Media Association (CCNMA) is the oldest organization of journalists of color and will celebrate its 35th anniversary in 2007. Its mission is to increase the number of Latinos working in the news media and to improve news coverage of Latinos in the United States. It has nearly 400 members in seven chapters throughout California.

In California, more than one-third of the population is Latino. In greater Los Angeles, more than half the population is Latino. Great strides have been made in Spanish-language media, but English-language media continues to languish in its representation of Latinos.

One of the reasons for this is that the FCC has failed in its efforts to monitor and foster more ownership of television stations by people of color. There is something terribly wrong with our media system when people of color comprise such substantial parts of the U.S. population but own so few broadcast outlets.

A recent report by the media reform organization Free Press found that while people of color make up 33 percent of the U.S. population, only 3.26 percent of all broadcast stations are owned by people of color. The report also finds that the number of stations owned by people of color has dropped since more consolidated media ownership was permitted under the 1996 Telecommunications Act.

Diversity is the cornerstone of a democratic media system; media should reflect the communities they serve and we cannot afford to lose diversity in any way. It would be unconscionable for the FCC to let large media owners buy up more local media outlets before redressing the agency's failure to foster minority voices in the media. In Los Angeles alone, three large corporations each control two stations, and a fourth large corporation owns a TV station and the largest daily newspaper in Los Angeles. Rather than at least eight separate and distinct voices, we have four.

CCNMA is concerned that further consolidation has resulted in massive layoffs in newsroom jobs across the media industry and has affected the quality of coverage the public receives.

CCNMA believes increasing the number of owners of color will improve news and programming received by communities of color and increase diversity in the broadcast work force. Studies show that competition improves the quality of coverage, and experience tells us that ownership by people of color usually fosters a greater diversity of viewpoints among rank-and-file journalists and among the news media's decision makers who shape news and information.

The FCC should not allow relaxation or elimination of the limits on media ownership. Allowing further concentration of local media markets will only worsen the problems we already have.

Our democracy requires the free flow of local information from diverse voices. The FCC should stand firm with the public against further concentration of media ownership in the hands of the few.