

Dual Network Ban Docket # 06-121 Stop Media Monopolies

The idyllic American dream is to rise to the top; to separate yourself from everyone else, and to eliminate your competition. It may sound harsh, but it is true in most aspects of our economic life. One area where this simply cannot reach is the four major networks controlling one another, thus making it necessary for a dual network ban.

We have the idealistic privilege of living in a society where we are given a variety of viewpoints and can formulate our own opinions from those. This is an important aspect to take into consideration: the formulation of different viewpoints. It can be argued that further deregulation and loosening of the “Dual Network Ban” may create more competition in the media marketplace. But rather, as your studies and others have shown, the opposite is true, and what will emerge are media monopolies on the current “Big Four” networks. According to the AFL-CIO unions in broadcasting and journalism, “Some of the FCC’s own studies clearly show that a large swath of these “new” outlets are owned by the same conglomerates that control traditional media. As such, they are not new and diverse voices in the marketplace. In fact, programming on the four major networks has become more, not less, homogenous over the past ten years.” Competition is not what will emerge from allowing less stringent rules and controls over networks. If we allow for the “big four” to overlap ownership the pool of ideas that we now enjoy will surely shrink, along with the quality of programming.

Competition plays a large role in the media today. We have this “uninhibited marketplace of ideas,” and without this, corporations would be out to eat each other to control as much as they possibly could. Once again, according to the AFL-CIO, loosening restrictions on the dual network ban would leave the American people subject to vastly reduced sources of information, along with the quality of news and entertainment being compromised.

It may only be four different points of view that we COULD get from the major networks, but yet this is still vital to our democracy; to have those varied viewpoints. We all know how varied the Fox network can be. The FCC says in its report on this matter of control over the UPN and/or the WB network that, “the reduction in broadcast network viewership during the last four years (has been caused by) the steady expansion of the cable industry...we anticipate that channel capacity on cable systems will continue to expand as more cable systems adopt digital technology.” Yet, all these new cable channels that are popping up are being owned by the Viacom and the Disneys, the same companies who own and operate the “Big Four.” It is vital that the FCC does not relax its dual network ban for this reason as well. If it

is allowed that the “big four” networks can be owned by the same company, it will adversely effect just as many cable and satellite channels, this allowing even less viewpoints (not more) than we already have.

NBC, CBS, FOX, and ABC give the American people the local coverage that no other network can. If the restrictions are loosened and networks are able to join together, we may lose the top notch local coverage of these networks. These networks have to compete with each other for local viewers. Their coverage on these matters has to be above the bar in order to keep/gain viewers. Annulment of the dual ban rule might compromise this aspect and leave local news sub par at best. Viewers would then look to alternate sources of information for news and entertainment.

Local broadcasting is the reason that I deeply care about the dual network ban. I enjoy the variety of viewpoints that the four networks can give me during the local broadcasts. I live in Chicago, which is a enormous news market. There is a plethora of ideas available to myself via the local broadcasts. Combining these networks puts this into jeopardy. I cannot afford to have my marketplace of ideas shrink even further than it already has. As I have shown, a more competitive market will not create diversity but rather homogeneity.

Keeping the four networks separate allows for that change and diversity in broadcast TV. Each one strives to reach a different section of the American people, and these networks are watched for those reasons. Any deviation from that, would lead to less variety from the networks, which is what makes them work today. Many people hate that during elections and big news stories all the networks are airing the same footage; that big red and blue map or the one view of the World Trade Center falling. Imagine if every night of television was like that. Imagine that same video airing all the time with no diversity or different vantage points. That is why it is so vital to keep the dual network ban “as is,” and not allow for deregulation. More competition would not be the result, rather media monopolies forming and taking over the media airwaves. America is founded on the difference of opinions and compromising through those options. Let us keep those opinions out there and let the American people still have a voice.

Tim Broomhead
18519 Arcadia
Lansing, IL 60438
(708) 212-2367