Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of	)	
	)	
2010 Quadrennial Regulatory Review – Review of the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996	)	MB Docket No. 09-182

REPLY COMMENTS OF MEDIA GENERAL, INC.
ON NOTICE OF INQUIRY

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July 26, 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

SUMMARY ii

I. AS THE FCC HAS RECOGNIZED, OWNERSHIP RESTRICTIONS ARE NOT NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF DIVERSE VOICES..... 2

II. RECENT EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATES THAT COMMONLY OWNED MEDIA OUTLETS DO NOT SPEAK WITH "ONE VOICE."..... 6

III. CROSS-OWNED NEWSROOMS ARE CONSISTENT WITH GOOD JOURNALISM PRACTICES..... 13

IV. CONCLUSION..... 18

SUMMARY

Aided by new technologies, members of the public today want access to news and content at whatever time and by whatever means are most convenient to them. As a result, news organizations operate on a 24-hour news cycle, and those that do not take this approach are increasingly finding themselves "bypassed," with their readers and viewers – and, therefore, their advertisers – flocking to alternative sources.

Through cross-ownership, Media General has found that it can meet the public's demands and remain a viable player in the new media world. Cross-ownership allows Media General to deliver various iterations of a news story throughout the day. Media General's journalists can first provide overnight or early morning breaking news through on-line reports or news broadcasts at dawn. They can then offer updated information on its websites or in mid-day broadcast reports, both in time for their readers' and viewers' lunch breaks. Toward the end of the day, Media General's reporters can update the story for its websites and early and late-evening newscasts. Finally, they can provide additional depth and background in a related story for the next morning's newspaper. With these multiple outlets, the focus becomes the news, the content, the story – not the platform.

Those opposing repeal of the newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership rule ("NBCO Rule") ignore the way in which news reporting has changed since 1975 and the benefits that are available through cross-ownership. They also ignore the numerous instances, described in the first section of these reply comments, in which the FCC as early as two decades ago addressed growing evidence that common ownership among various media outlets produced tangible public interest benefits. Given this evidence, the FCC, separate and apart from its periodic

reviews, repealed or relaxed various ownership regulations. In those decisions, the FCC noted that it did not expect liberalization to have an impact on viewpoint diversity. In fact, in the course of loosening its ownership rules, the FCC began to acknowledge that common ownership leads to increased diversity of content and viewpoint.

The empirical research reviewed in the second section of these reply comments bears out these FCC conclusions. In studies evaluating coverage of the 2000 and 2004 Presidential campaigns, researchers have found commonly owned properties do not speak with "one voice." Additional, more simplistic tallies of media endorsements from these same campaigns also show that commonly owned properties have endorsed different candidates or chosen, contrary to their commonly owned properties, to make no endorsement at all.

The final section of these rely comments explains that journalism – whether in the way it is practiced or taught – operates across numerous platforms. The "silos" of old and "competition across platforms" are gone, victims of the public's need for round-the-clock news. News organizations that do not follow the new trend toward multi-platform news delivery risk "being left behind and left out" – "bypassed" by new technology.

In short, the real world demonstrates that the NBCO Rule no longer serves any useful or relevant purpose and that it stands in the way of the public's need for 24-hour, high quality news. The Commission should act promptly to eliminate the NBCO Rule.

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REPLY COMMENTS OF MEDIA GENERAL, INC.
ON NOTICE OF INQUIRY

Media General, Inc. ("Media General"), by its attorneys, hereby files its reply comments in the above-captioned proceeding.[1] The comments offered to date in response to the *NOI* provide no basis for retaining the newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership rule, 47 C.F.R. § 73.3555(d) ("the NBCO Rule"), and, as Media General demonstrated in its initial comments filed on July 12, 2010, the NBCO Rule should be repealed in its entirety. As further support, and in response to contentions made in other parties' initial comments, these reply comments (i) discuss additional FCC precedent finding liberalization of ownership rules does not harm the availability of diverse voices, (ii) present new empirical evidence showing commonly owned properties do not speak with "one voice," and (iii) review testimony that cross-owned newsrooms are consistent with good journalism practices.

[1] 2010 Quadrennial Regulatory Review – Review of the Comm'ns Broad. Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecomms. Act of 1996, *Notice of Inquiry*, MB Docket No. 09-182, DA 10-92 (rel. May 25, 2010) ("*NOI*").

I. AS THE FCC HAS RECOGNIZED, OWNERSHIP RESTRICTIONS ARE NOT NECESSARY TO ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF DIVERSE VOICES.

Media General can agree with parties representing various public interest constituencies that consumers should have access to a wide variety of diverse and competing sources of news and information.[2] Media General disagrees, however, that government regulation is the only way to achieve that result. To the contrary, as the record in the FCC's last four rounds of biennial and quadrennial reviews of media ownership demonstrate, such diversity and competition already abound in markets large and small, as the result of the operation of market forces. Retention of the NBCO Rule is, therefore, unnecessary.

Media General's initial comments in response to the *NOI* reviewed the definitive determinations that the FCC has made on multiple occasions based on record evidence in its periodic reviews that the NBCO Rule is not necessary to serve the FCC's policy goals. As Media General noted, the FCC has found the NBCO Rule is not necessary to preserve competition, its retention actually harms the production of local news and information, and empirical evidence has shown the link between cross-ownership and common viewpoint to be "'tenuous, ill-defined, and difficult to measure.'"[3] The initial comments of those arguing for

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[2] *See* Comments of Office of Communication of United Church of Christ, Inc. *et al.*, at 2-3; Comments of the Communications Workers of America, *et al.*, at 3 ("CWA Comments").

[3] Comments of Media General, Inc. on Notice of Inquiry at 4-10 (quoting (at 8) 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review – Review of the Comm'ns Broad. Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecomms. Act of 1996: Cross-Ownership of Radio Broad. Stations in Local Markets, *Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, 18 FCC Rcd 13,620, 13,767 (2003) ("*July 2003 Decision*"), *aff'd in part, remanded in part, Prometheus Radio Project v. FCC*, 373 F.3d 372 (3d Cir. 2004), *cert. denied*, 545 U.S. 1123 (2005).

"Tenous" arguably falls far short of meeting the statutory standard of "necessary in the public interest" set forth in Section 202(h) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 as the basis for when rules should be retained. Telecomms. Act of 1996 Pub. L. No. 104-104, § 202(h), 119 Stat. 56, 111-12 (1996) ("1996 Act"); Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2004, PUB. L. No. 108-199, § 629, 118 Stat. 3 (2004) (amending Section 202(h) of the 1996 Act). Courts would

retention of the NBCO Rule ("NBCO Rule Supporters") showed the need for, and importance of, that review of precedent because they seem to have forgotten the FCC's prior findings – determinations which bind the FCC absent clear and compelling evidence of changed circumstances. The NBCO Rule Supporters make repeated statements oblivious to history and precedent, at one point even suggesting "[t]his rule is as important today as it was in 1975 when it was first adopted."[4]

The comments of the NBCO Rule Supporters emphasize their concern over diversity,[5] a troubling approach since the NBCO Rule has never been based on more than a "hoped-for" increase in diversity.[6] Given their focus, it is important to put on the record that the FCC, not just in its more recent periodic reviews, but in numerous precedents that preceded them, has acknowledged that the conjecture that ownership regulation leads to diversity of content and viewpoint lacks any basis in fact. This earlier FCC precedent confirms that the FCC has no sustainable basis for restricting newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership in any manner.

In the 15 years leading up to its 2003 decision to repeal the ban on newspaper/broadcast cross ownership,[7] the FCC was faced with growing evidence that common ownership among various media markets outlets produced tangible public interest benefits and that its continued

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doubtlessly agree that leaving a rule in place based on that finding, which has only become stronger since 2003, would be arbitrary and capricious.

[4] *See* CWA Comments at 30. *See also id*. at 8 ("There is not sufficient evidence that cross-ownership between newspapers and television has resulted in much competition, more diversity or more localism.").

[5] *See*, *e.g.*, Comments of the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists at 8-10 ("AFTRA Comments") with the heading, "Ownership Consolidation Poses Serious Threats to Viewpoint Diversity As Manifested by Eroding Standards in Television and Radio News Reporting"; CWA Comments at 13-14 with the heading "Co-Owned Newspaper/Television Combinations Reduce Viewpoint Diversity."

[6] *FCC v. Nat'l Citizens Comm. For Broad.* 436 U.S. 775, 786 (1978).

[7] *July 2003 Decision*, 18 FCC Rcd at 13,747.

restrictions suppressed those benefits. Given this evidence, the FCC repealed or relaxed various ownership regulations. In those earlier decisions, the FCC noted that it did not expect the liberalization to have an impact on viewpoint diversity. In fact, in the course of loosening its ownership rules, the FCC began to acknowledge that common ownership leads to increased diversity of content and viewpoint.

First, in 2001, the FCC came to that conclusion in its Dual Network Rule proceeding, when it found that common ownership of broadcast networks creates rather than eliminates incentives to diversify programming and serve niche interests and minority audiences. Specifically, the FCC found, much as Media General has observed with changes in its own markets, that with combined ownership, content options frequently increase:

> We also agree with commenters that a major network and an emerging network under common ownership would have a strong economic incentive to diversify their program offerings, particularly by increasing service to minority or niche tastes and interests. A single broadcast network has the incentive to attract the largest possible audience with mass appeal programming (which is similar to the programming offered by its rivals). However, if two networks are owned by a single entity, the entity has an incentive to attract an array of viewers with differing interests to produce the largest combined audience for the overall enterprise. This allows for the major network to pursue mass tastes, with the smaller network programming to pursue minority and niche tastes.[8]

Second, over a decade earlier, the FCC had relaxed its previous prohibition on joint ownership of same-market television and radio broadcast stations – the "one-to-a-market rule" – finding that the relaxation should not have a significant impact on viewpoint diversity.[9] In taking this step, the Commission noted that the comments filed in the proceeding showed that "the joint

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[8] Amendment of Section 73.658(g) of the Comm'ns Rules -- The Dual Network Rule, *Report and Order*, 16 FCC Rcd 11114, 11131 (2001).

[9] Amendment of Section 73.3555 of the Comm'ns Rules, the Broad. Multiple Ownership Rules, *Second Report and Order*, 4 FCC Rcd 1741, 1744, *recon. denied in part, granted in part*, 4 FCC Rcd 6489 (1989).

ownership of two or more media outlets in the same market does not necessarily lead to a commonality of viewpoints by those outlets."[10] Commenting parties had shown that group owners of broadcast stations, even in the same market, do not necessarily disseminate a "monolithic viewpoint" at all their outlets. A CBS study, in particular, showed that CBS same-market radio and television stations endorsed opposing candidates 45 percent of the time over a three-year period from 1980 to 1983.[11] Some of these differing endorsements came in such major political races as a gubernatorial contest in California, a gubernatorial primary in New York, and a Chicago mayoral primary. CBS also reported that its commonly owned stations took different editorial stances on important issues such as abortion and school prayer.[12] NBC submitted similar comments noting that its stations made editorial and programming decisions independently of other co-owned outlets, a procedure that produced a difference in operations.[13]

Third, the FCC acknowledged similar comments and reached consistent findings almost 20 years ago in the context of relaxing the radio local ownership rules, prior to the statutory liberalization of local radio ownership limits in 1996. In first proposing that radio owners be allowed to own more than one AM and one FM station per market, the FCC expressed the following opinion:

> On a local level, we believe that stations separately owned will each tend to strive for the same core audience with roughly the same type of programming, while the same stations managed in common may have greater incentives to appeal

[10] *Id.*

[11] *Id.*

[12] *Id.*

[13] *Id.* In its comments in the 2006 Quadrennial Regulatory Review proceeding, Media General supplied similar evidence from the 2004 Presidential campaign showing that endorsements made by the various newspapers owned by numerous large newspaper companies, including Media General, did not follow a uniform pattern. Comments of Media General, Inc., MB Docket No. 06-121, *et al.*, Oct. 23, 2006 ("MG 2006 Comments"), at Appendix 6.

> separately to distinct segments of the audience with distinct programming. In other words, stations managed in common can effectively counterprogram each other. Therefore, we believe that increased group ownership need not necessarily decrease diversity of programming and, to the contrary, may encourage it; the Commission has noted that "it is instead possible to have greater viewpoint diversity than there is ownership diversity."[14]

Shortly thereafter, in acting to relax the local radio ownership rules, the FCC noted that the commenting parties in the proceeding, including the Federal Trade Commission, had agreed with the *NPRM*'s proposition that increased concentration will not harm diversity because a single owner is likely to try to program different stations to appeal to different audience segments so that total audience size is maximized, unlike competing stations, which are likely to reach the same core audience.[15] Again, Media General's observation of stations in its co-owned markets has proven this and the FCC's other predictions to be true, no matter what type of programming content is at issue. Common or cross-ownership does not put the availability of diverse voices at risk.

II. RECENT EMPIRICAL EVIDENCE DEMONSTRATES THAT COMMONLY OWNED MEDIA OUTLETS DO NOT SPEAK WITH "ONE VOICE."

Recent empirical evidence also confirms that commonly owned properties do not speak with a single voice. In *One Owner, One Voice? Testing a Central Premise of Newspaper-Broadcast Cross-Ownership Policy,* a study published in 2008, Professor David Pritchard demonstrates that the premise that commonly owned newspapers and broadcast stations in a

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[14] Revision of Radio Rules and Policies, *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, 6 FCC Rcd 3275, 3276 (1991) ("*NPRM*") (citations omitted). The FCC also noted that it had already had the opportunity to demonstrate the proof of this theory in the cable context.

[15] Revision of Radio Rules and Policies, *Report and Order*, 7 FCC Rcd 2755, 2771, *recon. granted in part, denied in part*, 7 FCC Rcd 6387 (1992), *further recon. granted in part, denied in part*, 9 FCC Rcd 7183 (1994).

community speak with a single voice about important political matters – the conjectural foundation for restricting new newspaper/broadcast cross-ownerships – is not valid."[16]

Professor Pritchard's recent study builds on his earlier work in this area. In an initial study published in 2001, he had examined co-owned media properties in three cities – Chicago, Dallas, and Milwaukee.[17] In a second study in 2002, one commissioned by the FCC, Professor Pritchard expanded his work to include an additional seven co-owned properties in six other cities and drew conclusions about all 10 combinations.[18] Both of these studies established that common ownership of a newspaper and television station in a community does not result in a predictable pattern of news coverage and commentary about important political events by the commonly owned outlets.[19]

To reach these conclusions, the 2001 and 2002 studies analyzed the political "slant" of news content in co-owned media properties during the last 15 days of the 2000 Bush-Gore Presidential election. Professor Pritchard and his associates developed a numerical coding and grading system for quantifying this "slant." They then examined newspaper editorials, cartoons, staff opinion pieces, syndicated columns, guest opinion essays, reader's letters, and free-standing

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[16] David Pritchard, *et al.*, *One Owner, One Voice? Testing a Central Premise of Newspaper-Broadcast Cross-Ownership Policy*, COMMUNICATIONS LAW AND POLICY, 13:1, 1-27 (2008) ("Pritchard 2008 Study").

[17] David Pritchard, *A Tale of Three Cities: Diverse and Antagonistic Information in Situations of Newspaper/Broadcast Cross-Ownership*, 54 FED. COM. L.J. 31 (Dec. 2001) ("Pritchard 2001 Study").

[18] David Pritchard, *Viewpoint Diversity in Cross-Owned Newspapers and Television Stations: a Study of News Coverage of the 2000 Presidential Campaign*, FCC Media Ownership Working Group, 2002-2, September 2002 ("Study No. 2"). The study is not paginated. Citations assume that the first page following "Executive Summary" is page 1.

[19] *Id.* at Executive Summary.

photographs as well as television news reports. From these, they computed an objective "slant co-efficient" that allowed them to conclude whether a media outlet was pro-Bush or pro-Gore.[20]

In the 2001 study, Professor Pritchard found no evidence of owners' influence on, or control of, news coverage by co-owned newspapers and broadcast stations in Chicago, Dallas, and Milwaukee. Rather, the empirical results led him to conclude that the cross-owned properties offered a "wealth" of diverse and antagonistic information. He summarized his results and conclusions as follows:

> In other words, the evidence does not support the fears of those who claim that common ownership of newspaper and broadcast stations in a community inevitably leads to a narrowing, whether intentional or unintentional, of the range of news and opinions in the community . . .
>
> This Article examined whether three existing newspaper/broadcast combinations in major markets provided information about the 2000 [P]residential campaign from "diverse and antagonistic sources." The results show clearly that they did provide a wide range of diverse information. In other words, the Commission's historical assumption that media ownership inevitably shapes the news to tout its own interests may no longer be true (if it ever was).[21]

In short, Professor Pritchard concluded that "the prohibition on newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership has outlived its usefulness."[22]

In the 2002 study commissioned by the FCC, Professor Pritchard evaluated additional co-owned properties in New York, Fargo, Hartford, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Tampa.[23] Of these new combinations, Professor Pritchard concluded that the newspaper's and television station's coverage at the Phoenix, Fargo, and Tampa combinations and at News Corporation's co-owned

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[20] Pritchard 2001 Study at 38-41; Study No. 2 at 5-7.

[21] Pritchard 2001 Study at 49-51 (footnotes omitted).

[22] *Id.* at 51.

[23] In New York, he studied two newspaper/television combinations. In other markets, he studied just one combination. The combination which he studied in Tampa was Media General's WFLA-TV and *The Tampa Tribune*.

properties in New York exhibited slants that were "noticeably different" from each other.[24] He also added the combination in Milwaukee that he studied in 2001 to this group with "noticeably different" slant, yielding a total of five combinations with this result.[25] Of the other three new combinations and the two he already studied in Dallas and Chicago, he concluded that the "overall" slant of the newspaper's coverage of the 2000 campaign was not significantly different from the overall slant of the local television station's coverage.[26]

In his 2002 study, Professor Pritchard also pointed out several additional facts demonstrating a lack of connection between the coverage provided by co-owned properties. First, Tribune Company, which had four combinations in the study, did not require its newspapers to coordinate their endorsements for president, as evidenced by the fact that, of the four Tribune Company newspapers in the study, two (*Chicago Tribune* and *Hartford Courant*) endorsed Bush, one (*Newsday*) endorsed Gore, and one (*Los Angeles Times*) made no endorsement. Second, of the seven television stations in the study's cross-owned combinations in which the newspaper endorsed Bush, two (WTIC in Hartford and KPNX in Phoenix) provided coverage of the Presidential campaign that had a clear pro-Gore slant.[27]

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[24] Study No. 2 at 8.

[25] *Id.*

[26] *Id.* Professor Pritchard determined what constituted a meaningful difference between commonly-owned properties "via two-tailed, independent – sample T-tests." *Id.* He found the following:

> [T]he tests suggested that there was an 83% chance that a difference of the type we found with the Fargo combination was a meaningful difference. For Milwaukee and Tampa, the statistic was 89%. For Phoenix, the statistic was 96%. For the News Corporations [sic] New York combination, the statistic was 99%. None of the other combinations under study had percentages higher than 65%, which we judged not adequate to support a finding of a meaningful difference.

Id. at n. 15.

[27] *Id.*

While Professor Pritchard was more tempered in his conclusions in the 2002 study and also moved the combinations he previously studied in Dallas and Chicago out of the group exhibiting "noticeably different" slant, he nonetheless concludes,

> for the ten markets studied, our analysis of the coverage of [the] last two weeks of the 2000 [P]residential campaign suggests that common ownership of a newspaper and a television station in a community does not result in a predictable pattern of news coverage and commentary on important political events between the commonly-owned outlets. This is not to say that the news organizations under study presented a vast range of viewpoints or that their news coverage was helpful in enabling citizens to make informed choices on Election Day. It is to say, however, that we found no generalized evidence of ownership manipulation of the news in the situations of local cross-ownership we studied.

As Professor Pritchard more succinctly stated in his executive summary, "the data suggest that common ownership of a newspaper and a television station in a community does not result in a predictable pattern of news coverage and commentary about important political events in the commonly owned outlets."[28]

Another empirical study by Professor Pritchard submitted in spring 2002 in the Commission's local radio ownership proceeding (MM Docket Nos. 01-317 and 00-244) also addressed the conjecture that ownership and diversity are linked.[29] This analysis surveyed the growth in a wide range of local media outlets – not just daily newspapers and broadcast stations – that provided local content in five variously-sized markets; the survey reported information at ten-year intervals from 1942 to 2002 as well as in 1995, just prior to adoption of

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[28] *Id.* at "Executive Summary."

[29] David Pritchard, *The Expansion of Diversity: A Longitudinal Study of Local Media Outlets in Five American Communities*, March 2002, attached as Appendix A to Viacom Inc.'s Comments in MM Docket Nos. 01-317 and 00-244, filed March 27, 2002 ("Viacom Comments"). The FCC incorporated this radio ownership proceeding into its 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review. *See* 2002 Biennial Regulatory Review – Review of the Comm'ns. Broad. Ownership Rules and Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996; Cross-Ownership of Broad. Stations and Newspapers; Rules and Policies Concerning Multiple

the Telecommunications Act of 1996. In these five markets, which included Lisbon, North Dakota; Florence, South Carolina; Rockford, Illinois; Syracuse, New York; and New York, New York, Professor Pritchard found a consistent increase in the availability of diverse local sources of news and information that was not undercut by any trend in consolidation of ownership:

> The data presented in this study make it clear that the number of media outlets focusing on news and information about local events has increased steadily over the years. That the rate of increase has accelerated since the Telecommunications Act of 1996 was passed suggests that the economic consolidation that ensued did not diminish diversity of local media content. The patterns in all five of the communities we studied were similar.[30]

As Professor Pritchard concluded, "[t]he study presented here further challenges the wisdom of focusing on issues of ownership to attempt to maximize access to diverse media outlets."[31]

Thus, all three previous Pritchard studies support repeal of the newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership rule. While Media General has never seen a connection between ownership and viewpoint and, therefore, questions why studies regarding content are even necessary, Professor Pritchard's reviews in 2001 and 2002 should have put to rest once and for all that, no matter what the market size, common ownership does not result in common approaches to the presentation of news and public affairs and does not harm the presentation of diverse viewpoints and diverse local content.

Ownership of Radio Broad. Stations in Local Markets, *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, 17 FCC Rcd 18,503, 18,508 n. 31 (2002).

[30] Viacom Comments, Appendix 5 at 22. As the study explained, the *NPRM* in the proceeding had specifically requested analysis of the Syracuse, Rockford, and Florence markets. *Id.* at 1. For comparison purposes, Professor Pritchard added New York, the nation's largest market, and an isolated rural market, Lisbon, North Dakota. *Id.* at 8. Although Media General owns a newspaper/television cross-ownership in the Myrtle Beach-Florence DMA, these acquisitions were made only at the very tail end of the time period under review in Professor Pritchard's radio study.

[31] *Id.* at 24.

In the *July 2003 Decision*, the FCC noted that critics had challenged Professor Pritchard's 2002 FCC study for failing to include a "control" group of independently owned broadcast stations and newspapers for the sake of comparison as well as including too few data points.[32] Now, in a more recent and similar study evaluating the 2004 Presidential election, Professor Pritchard addresses this criticism by including a "control" group – a collection of independently owned stations in Chicago against which to compare performance of outlets commonly owned by Tribune Company – and also increases the number of broadcast properties by adding radio outlets to the analysis.[33]

This 2008 study reveals results consistent with the trends in his earlier work. For the first part of his 2008 analysis, which focused only on the cross-owned media clusters, Professor Pritchard concluded as follows:

> Overall, the results . . . fail to support the one owner, one voice premise. In Milwaukee and Dayton there was a clear difference in partisan slant between a company's newspaper and its radio station. In Chicago there were no appreciable differences in slant among the Tribune Company's newspaper, television station, and radio station. All three media outlets provided balanced coverage of the campaign rather than the coordinated, strongly partisan slant that the one owner, one voice premise presumes.[34]

In the second analysis, which compared the coverage of the Presidential campaign in Tribune Company's newspaper, television station, and radio station with the coverage of a similar "control" group of Chicago media outlets that had no common ownership with each other, Professor Pritchard achieved similar results:

> The message of the analysis . . . is that, it was difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between cross-owned and similar non-cross-owned media outlets in Chicago merely by looking at the slant of the coverage of the [P]residential campaign. Put another way, an observer would not have been able to discern,

[32] *July 2003 Decision* at 13,764.
[33] Pritchard 2008 Study at 21-22.
[34] *Id.* at 21.

> simply from looking at the news and opinion content of the Chicago newspaper-television-radio clusters under study, which set of media outlets was owned by one company and which was owned by three independent companies.[35]

In the 2004 Presidential election, as Professor Pritchard notes, media owners may have had a clear reason to support President Bush over challenger Senator Kerry because the latter's campaign platform called for tightening media ownership limits. He finds, however, that "[d]espite owners' interest in less regulation, . . . our study found no evidence that media outlets systematically slanted their political coverage in favor of candidates who supported greater deregulation of media ownership."[36]

In short, Professor Pritchard concludes,

> At least in the context of newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership, . . . [the] findings undermine the premise that each media owner constitutes a single voice on important subjects such as [P]residential elections. Cross-owned newspapers and broadcast stations may not always provide more newsprint diversity than do similar media without common ownership, but there is no reason to believe that they systematically provide less.[37]

Professor Pritchard's determination that cross-ownership does not harm the availability of diverse voices comports with Media General's observations in its own markets.

III. CROSS-OWNED NEWSROOMS ARE CONSISTENT WITH GOOD JOURNALISM PRACTICES.

As all commenting parties would agree, news organizations today find themselves in a 24-hour news cycle. To meet the demands of their readers and viewers, Media General, like other news organizations, must work continuously throughout the day to advance a developing story – covering it first on-line or in early morning broadcast reports; adding more details on websites and in mid-day broadcasts; updating it on websites and in early and late evening

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[35] *Id.* at 22.

[36] Pritchard 2008 Study at 25 (footnote omitted).

[37] *Id.* at 23.

newscasts; and, finally, providing additional depth and background in a related story for the next morning's newspaper. Throughout this process, Media General and other news providers are aided by new and evolving social media, which allow the public to share information about events and also help advance a story by providing insight and commentary in a manner unheard of just two years ago when the FCC last reviewed the NBCO Rule. Those companies, like Media General, that have cross-owned platforms find that advantage allows them to deliver both a greater volume and a higher quality of local news. Their multiple platforms ensure that residents of their cross-owned markets will be able to obtain news and updates throughout the day in whatever means and at whatever time is most convenient for them. To Media General's readers and viewers, the focus becomes the news and content, not the platform.

Ignoring the ways in which news reporting has changed since 1975 and these benefits available from cross-ownership, two commenting parties attempt to argue that cross-ownership has had a negative effect on employee well-being and operations in various newsrooms across the country.[38] As support, they merely cite several isolated accounts of newsroom operations at Media General's and others' cross-owned properties, noting convergence means "employees . . . [are] asked to take on tasks outside their job duties"[39] and journalists "now cooperate across medi[a] where they used to compete."[40] These accounts paint an inaccurate and incomplete picture for several reasons.

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[38] AFTRA Comments at 11; CWA Comments at 13.

[39] AFTRA Comments at 11 (citing ERIC KLINENBERG, FIGHTING FOR AIR -- THE BATTLE TO CONTROL AMERICA'S MEDIA (1st. ed Metropolitan Books 2007) ("FIGHTING FOR AIR")).

[40] CWA Comments at 13-14, (citing Michael Dupagne and Bruce Garrison, *The Making and Influence of Convergence: A Qualitative Case Study of Newsroom Work at the Tampa News Center*, JOURNALISM STUDIES, 7:2 (2006), 237-55 (Dupagne Study"); Jane B. Singer, *Strange Bedfellows: The Diffusion of Convergence in Four News Organizations*, JOURNALISM STUDIES, 5:1 (2004), 3-18 ("Singer Study")).

First, the sources upon which these quotes rely are quite dated, drawn from surveys made and interviews conducted shortly after the turn of this century when converged newsrooms were just being formed. The first of these accounts is drawn from *Fighting for Air – the Battle to Control America's Media*, which on page-after-page makes its pro-regulatory bias clear. Although published in 2007, this account is based on interviews conducted at Media General's News Center in Tampa in 2001 just one year after the joint news center had been launched.[41] The second and third accounts, *Strange Bedfellows? One Diffusion of Convergence in Four News Organizations* and *The Meaning and Inference of Convergence: A qualitative case study of newsroom work at the Tampa News Center*, similarly were based on interviews conducted in the first half of 2003. Media General has taken a very open approach in making the News Center accessible to the public, researchers, and regulators. As subsequent tours and reviews have shown, journalists have come to embrace the opportunities cross-ownership presents them, and, with 24-hour news cycles, "competition" across platforms is clearly a relic of the past.

Second, though the 2003 on-site reviews of the News Center came early in its development, even the Singer Study shows support for convergence taking hold among the journalists who were interviewed. As Professor Singer reported,

> -- Though not universally enthusiastic, most journalists perceived convergence as having a number of advantages relative to the long-standing arrangement in which each news organization is independent and, in the case of the newspaper and the television station, competitive. On a personal level, they agreed that the ability to work in more than one medium is a career booster or at least a savvy insurance policy."[42]
>
> -- "[J]ournalists overwhelmingly believed their company was on the right track in seeking to converge newsrooms."[43]

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[41] FIGHTING FOR AIR at 126.

[42] Singer Study at 7.

[43] *Id*.

-- "Still, the overall view was generally favorable, judging by both the interviews and positive responses to such questionnaire statements as 'Overall, converged newsrooms are a good idea' and 'Convergence will prove to be a successful editorial strategy for the new industry as a whole.'"[44]

-- "[J]ournalists generally disagreed with the questionnaire statement 'I feel pressured to cooperate in our convergence efforts even though I don't really want to.'"[45]

Similarly, the Dupagne Study, while still noting "some" individuals' concerns about the sufficiency of time to perform their converged responsibilities, overall found greater acceptance:

> Job and rule changes were expected given the scope and depth of the News Center operation. Most changes related to additional duties or responsibilities beyond those originally stipulated in a single platform environment. The fact that journalists saw their core work as generally unchanged is somewhat surprising, however. This outcome may be explained by the fact that convergence has brought additional efficiency through shared resources that allow the same number of people to get more done in a given time period such as a news days. Not only has media convergence at the News Center fostered a greater sense of community among the different units but has also brought to the forefront the importance of versatility in news-gathering operations. Respondents are now thinking about their job duties at different levels. Most of them view these changes as an evolutionary trend rather than a complete overhaul of the existing newsroom culture.[46]

Third, as converged newsrooms have gained experience in producing news for delivery on a 24-hour-a-day basis over multiple platforms, it has become abundantly clear that old journalistic "silos," which gave rise to competition among journalists working on different platforms, are no longer of any relevance. As Professor Sree Sreenivasan of the Columbia Graduate School of Journalism explained in the last quadrennial review, "consumers today demand, and increasingly expect, more engaging reporting and story-telling across multiple

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[44] *Id*. at 12.

[45] *Id*. at 13.

[46] Dupagne Study at 250-51.

platforms."[47] This change in consumer demand, fueled in part by changing technologies, has caused the breakdown in these "silos":

> One of the conventions and operating models through much of the past century has been to make journalists work in silos. Newspaper journalists here, radio journalists there, TV journalists in that other silo. Journalists were identified and paid by companies who separated them into these formats. Personality quirks and stereotypes entered popular culture; the hard-charging print investigative reporter; the perfectly coiffed TV anchor; the guy with "a face for radio." That's the way the industry worked and that's the way journalism schools churned out their graduates.
>
> But nowadays, that makes little sense. As the media industry changes and diverse competitors enter the picture, it requires a new generation of journalists who don't see themselves as fitting into silos. They must be journalists first, working in a format-neutral environment, using different techniques for different kinds of stories. They can't wear blinders based on the delivery system of the news; they must just deliver the news. Thinking of these journalists as, say, just newspaper reporters or TV reporters doesn't quite work, because the marketplace demands that they work in multiple fields in real time, taking advantage of the convergence of technologies, formats and skills.[48]

According to Professor Sreenivasan, "those [companies] that continue to operate in silos . . . are in real danger of being bypassed altogether. The companies that offer their employees a variety of storytelling and story execution methods are going to have the greatest chance of success and so are being sought out by the best and the brightest students and journalists and will find the largest audiences among consumers."[49] Those that do not follow this approach risk "being left out and left behind."[50]

Professor Sreenivasan reports that journalism schools have now recognized that the coverage and delivery of local news has changed, due to these changing audience demands and the competition from numerous new diverse sources of content. These schools, on which he

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[47] MG 2006 Comments at Appendix 4B at 1.
[48] *Id.* at 1.
[49] *Id.* at 3.
[50] *Id*.

reports, now teach a multi-platform approach to journalism, an approach like that followed by Media General in Tampa and its other convergence markets and one that the schools' students are demanding and finding essential as they take their first jobs at television stations, newspapers, and other media around the country.[51] Contrary to the early observations of those who seemed sympathetic to continued regulation, converged newsrooms today function well and operate efficiently with journalists seamlessly moving among platforms as they seek to meet the public's demand for the latest news in their local communities.

IV. CONCLUSION.

The record filed in response to the *NOI* offers no reason for the FCC to propose retention of any vestige of the *NOI*. The NBCO Rule should be promptly eliminated. Media General urges the Commission to do so, including, as it noted in its initial comments, by severing the NBCO Rule from this proceeding and moving quickly to repeal it.

Respectfully submitted,

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July 26, 2010

[51] *Id.* at 3-4.