

We need more diversity not more consolidation. The Rush Limbaugh scandal has reached a tipping point.

As you've likely heard, on an episode of his radio show Limbaugh verbally abused a woman who testified before Congress about health-care coverage for contraceptives. Since then, millions have urged advertisers to pull their ads from his program. So far more than 45 advertisers have agreed to do so, and more are piling on every day.¹

Meanwhile, many of us have wondered: How did this guy get such a megaphone in the first place?

The answer? Media consolidation.

Years of bad media policies have completely altered the radio landscape in the U.S. Today, a chauvinist like Limbaugh is piped over hundreds of conglomerate-owned stations while diverse, local voices have been shoved off the air. People of color own just 7.7 percent of our country's full-power radio stations. And women — Limbaugh's favorite target — own just 6 percent of all broadcast outlets.

The proof is in the numbers. Here's how a blowhard like Limbaugh reaches an audience of millions every day:

- Nearly 600 stations across the U.S. carry Limbaugh's show.²
- It's distributed by a subsidiary of Clear Channel, the mammoth radio company that runs almost 800 stations across the country — making it the biggest radio conglomerate on Earth.³
- Thanks to relaxed FCC rules dictating the number of outlets a single media company can own, Clear Channel is allowed to take control of as many radio stations as it can snap up, and it can operate up to eight radio stations in a single market.
- And as is typical of media conglomerates, Clear Channel has started laying off all of its local DJs, replacing them with pre-recorded voices that are beamed in from who knows where.⁴

If you think that's outrageous, consider this: The FCC is now proposing rules that could allow companies like Clear Channel to own even more media outlets at the expense of communities starved for diverse, local content. That means a few loudmouthed radio personalities like Limbaugh will be able to set the national agenda and drown out the perspectives of women and people of color. Obviously more consolidation is not the answer.