

Broken Promises



Actions speak louder than words.

We see this when our children promise to share — and then hoard their Halloween candy, refusing their angelic parents even the smallest Snickers. And this dynamic really hits home when leaders deliver principled speeches — and then neglect to follow through on their promises.

In 2008, President Obama spoke out against media consolidation and for more diverse ownership of radio and television stations. "Rules promoting the public interest and diversity in media ownership," he said, "are too important for the FCC to accept an agenda supported by the Washington special interests."

Right now those same special interests are winning out. Last year the FCC signed off on one of the largest media mergers in history, blessing the Comcast-NBC Universal deal. And now Obama's FCC is on the verge of caving to industry lobbyists who want to remove one of the last remaining curbs to runaway media consolidation — the rule that prevents one company from owning broadcast stations and newspapers in the same market. Free Press [spoke out against the FCC's proposals in comments](#) filed on Monday.

As anyone who's ever landed on Boardwalk in a game of Monopoly knows, only those who control a market benefit from monopolies. The FCC's rules will pave the way for even less community-centered reporting and more of the cookie-cutter fluff that passes for news these days.

And for FCC watchers, these proposals are likely to inspire a feeling of *déjà vu*: They are the same exact rule changes that former Chairman Kevin Martin offered in 2007 and that the public, Congress and a court subsequently rebuked. In 2011, a federal court of appeals threw out the 2007 effort to weaken the newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership rule.

In its decision, the court also instructed the FCC to assess the impact of its media ownership rules on ownership opportunities for women and people of color. Women own just 6 percent of all broadcast outlets, and people of color own just 3 percent of our nation's full-power TV stations.

But instead of heeding the court's mandate, the FCC has delivered proposals that are a boon to industry. Its rules would do absolutely nothing to boost opportunities for women and people of color.

Those considerations, the agency appears to have decided, will have to wait until the next ownership review rolls around. "The FCC now plans to punt consideration of [diversity issues] to 2014, defying the court's instructions," said Free Press Senior Policy Counsel Corie Wright. (And 2014 is actually a best-case scenario — the current quadrennial review was supposed to take place in 2010 and didn't launch until the waning days of 2011.)

So what's Obama up to in the midst of all this? He's busy looking the other way.

Tell the president to keep his commitment to fostering a more diverse media. It's not too late for the FCC to reverse course.