

The large media conglomerates argue that the existing ban on media cross-ownership aimed at preventing a single corporation from controlling the media in a community has “outlived its original purpose” in the era of the Internet. They’re wrong.

Traditional media still dominate. “People spend far more time with television news than online news,” according to a September, 2012, study by the Pew Research Center for the People & the Press. The study found that 55 percent of those surveyed said they got news from television. It also said “people spent more time on average getting news from radio than getting news online.” Of course it’s true that there are new opportunities online for news and information, but many of the top news websites are owned by the same conglomerates that control other major media.

What is particularly disturbing about FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski’s stealth attempt to change the rules is that the American people already have spoken out on this issue. In 2007, under then-Chairman Kevin Martin, the FCC proposed similar changes and held a series of public meetings around the country to solicit public input. The response was overwhelming. Thousands turned out to the public meetings and an astonishing 3 million Americans weighed in with comments. The message was clear: 99 percent of the public comments opposed the media consolidation proposal. The 2007 proposal was also rejected by a bipartisan majority in the US Senate. A federal appeals court eventually threw out the rule because it did not adequately address the impact its changes would have on female and minority media ownership.