

Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of)
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)
2010 Quadrennial Regulatory Review - Review of) MB Docket No. 09-182
the Commission's Broadcast Ownership Rules and)
Other Rules Adopted Pursuant to Section 202 of)
the Telecommunications Act of 1996)
)
Promoting Diversification of Ownership) MB Docket No. 07-294
In the Broadcasting Services)

**SUPPLEMENTAL COMMENTS OF THE
NEWSPAPER ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA**

The Newspaper Association of America (“NAA”)¹ appreciates the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council’s (“MMTC”) study on the impacts of cross-ownership rules on broadcast stations that are owned by women and minorities.² The NAA commends the MMTC for gathering data about the relationship of cross-ownership and media ownership diversity, in response to concerns that a few commenters raised in this proceeding. The study provides additional evidence that the Commission’s modest proposed changes to the cross-ownership regulations would not harm minority ownership. Accordingly, the Commission should proceed with its plan for this much-needed regulatory relief.

The study’s findings are unambiguous: minority and female owners of broadcast stations do not believe that cross-ownership has *any* impact on their business. BIA/Kelsey,

¹ NAA is a nonprofit organization representing nearly 2,000 newspapers and their multiplatform businesses in the U.S. and Canada. NAA members include daily and non-daily newspapers, other print publications, and online ventures. More than 60 percent of NAA’s members represent small markets with print circulations of 20,000 or less.

² BIA/Kelsey, *The Impact of Cross Media Ownership on Minority/Women Owned Broadcast Stations* (May 30, 2013) (“MMTC Report”).

which conducted the study for MMTC, asked station owners in cross-owned markets to identify their primary challenges. The station owners identified a number of factors that do, in fact, affect their business, including market conditions, ratings, audience reach, and staff retention.³ But the owners did not cite cross-ownership as a business concern. Similarly, not a single minority station owner identified cross-ownership as a challenge for providing news and information.⁴ When owners of 14 local broadcast operations were asked about emerging competitors, only one even mentioned a cross-owned media operation.⁵ BIA/Kelsey was understandably “struck by the lack of any large concern by almost all of the respondents to these cross-media operations.”⁶ We fully agree with BIA/Kelsey’s statement that the findings “provide evidence that the impact of cross-media ownership on minority and women broadcast ownership is probably negligible.”⁷

This study provides additional evidence in the record that supports the Commission’s modest proposed changes to the cross-ownership rule.⁸ In fact, relaxing the ban would provide all media with much-needed capital and enable them to continue to cover all communities, including people of color. FCC-commissioned research has demonstrated that on average, a cross-owned television station produces nearly 50 percent more local news,⁹ airs 30

³ MMTC Report at 6-7.

⁴ *Id.* at 8-9.

⁵ *Id.* at 7.

⁶ *Id.* at 9.

⁷ *Id.* at 10.

⁸ See Supplemental Comments of the Newspaper Association of America, MB Docket Nos. 09-182, 07-294 (December 26, 2012) (“NAA Supplemental Comments”).

⁹ Jack Erb, Media Ownership Study 4, *Local Information Programming and the Structure of Television Markets*, at pp. 27-28.

percent more coverage of state and local political candidates,¹⁰ and devotes 40 percent more time to candidates' speeches.¹¹

In the face of the overwhelming evidence of the benefits of cross-ownership, the few opponents have scrambled to find *any* justification for retaining these outdated restrictions. In a last-ditch effort, the opponents attempted to argue that any regulatory changes would reduce diverse ownership of stations. The MMTC Report demonstrates that there is simply no support for this argument. When provided numerous opportunities to identify the challenges that they face, minority broadcasters in cross-owned markets uniformly failed to identify cross-ownership.

Rather than address the substance of the MMTC Report's findings, cross-ownership opponents attack the report for failing to provide a quantitative statistical analysis,¹² something that the MMTC Report never purported to provide. At the outset of the report, BIA/Kelsey makes clear that the sample size is small.¹³ Likewise, MMTC never claimed that this study was definitive; MMTC explicitly states that the study "was not intended to be exhaustive."¹⁴ Indeed, because very few markets allow cross-ownership of newspapers and broadcast stations, the sample size is relatively low. Accordingly, BIA/Kelsey appropriately determined that a qualitative study would provide the most useful information about the subject.

¹⁰ Jeffrey Milyo, *Effects of Cross-Ownership on the Local Content and Political Slant of Local Television News*, FCC Media Study 6 (Sept. 2007).

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² See Ex Parte Letter of Free Press, MB Docket Nos. 09-182, 07-294 (June 26, 2013) ("Free Press Letter").

¹³ See MMTC Report at i.

¹⁴ See Ex Parte Letter of the Minority Media & Telecommunications Council, MB Docket Nos. 09-182, 07-294 (May 30, 2013).

Cross-ownership opponents state that the MMTC Report is “no substitute for quantitative empirical research,”¹⁵ yet they provide no suggestions as to how a researcher could conduct such a study. Moreover, the opponents have provided absolutely no legal or policy justification for why such large-scale research would be necessary. Their calls for yet another study are merely delay tactics. The Commission should reject these desperate attempts to derail common-sense reform.

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The MMTC Report reaffirms what has long been known throughout the industry: cross-ownership does not harm minority ownership of broadcast stations. NAA shares the goal of increasing minority media ownership, and has endorsed a number of long-pending proposals that would improve broadcast diversity.¹⁶ But the Commission should not delay much-needed regulatory relief that has absolutely no relation to minority ownership. Accordingly, NAA urges the Commission to adopt its proposal to modestly relax the cross-ownership ban.

Respectfully submitted,



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¹⁵ Free Press Letter at 3.

¹⁶ See NAA Supplemental Comments at 9-11.