

Media *is* not a partisan issue

Five media conglomerates — Viacom/CBS, Disney, Time Warner, News Corp. and NBC/GE — control the vast majority of what we watch, listen to and read.

COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY and people of all political stripes are feeling the impact of media that have gotten too big and lost touch with their audience. This situation will only get worse if the remaining limits on local ownership are gutted by the Federal Communications Commission.

If the FCC throws out longstanding protections for local media, one company could own the major daily paper, three television stations, and eight radio stations in one city — effectively creating “media company towns,” where a single corporation’s views would drown out all the others.

The last time the FCC tried to change media ownership rules; it was opposed by a broad coalition from across the political spectrum — from the National Rifle Association to the National Organization for Women, the Parents Television Council to Common Cause. These groups were joined by 3 million concerned citizens from across the country and a nonpartisan alliance of politicians that included Barbara Boxer, John Kerry, Jesse Helms and Trent Lott.

Serving Local Communities

People from such different political backgrounds find common ground is in the belief that too much media control rests in too few hands. Media consolidation jeopardizes citizens’ ability to speak up about what they want to see and hear coming across the public airwaves they own, in their local communities, where their voice should count the most.

Diverse ownership and more competition encourage the media to better serve local communities. Studies show that:

- Locally owned broadcasters devote, on average, an additional 20 to 25 percent of their newscasts to local news stories — approximately five more minutes per half hour broadcast.
- When ownership is transferred from a local family to a national chain, local issues get less coverage.
- Newsrooms owned by the big chains rely more on syndicated feeds and are more likely to air national stories with no local connection.

If the media ownership rules were changed, smaller media markets would be more easily dominated by bigger, out-of-state media companies.

Our broadcasting system was designed to reflect the needs of each local market — not those of media moguls in distant boardrooms. We need a media system that reflects a diversity of viewpoints, ideologies and values, and provides a forum where these ideas can be fairly debated and discussed.

Tell the FCC to Stop Media Consolidation

The Town Meeting on the Future of Media in Columbus on March 7 is your opportunity to speak out. Visit www.freepress.net/future for more information.

“Concentration of power over what we see in the news is a danger to democracy.”
— *William Safire*

“There is no more important struggle for American democracy than ensuring a diverse, independent and free media.”
— *Bill Moyers*

reform media. transform democracy.

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