

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 1, 2006

The Honorable Kevin J. Martin  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Martin:

As the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) begins its review of rules governing our nation's broadcast media ownership, we write to ask you to conduct the proceedings in an open and transparent way by fully disclosing the proposed rule changes and holding a series of public hearings on the proposal.

In 2003, the FCC voted to drastically relax media ownership rules without adequate input from the public. Subsequently, more than 2.3 million Americans contacted the FCC to register their opposition to the rule changes. Groups as diverse as the Parents Television Council, Consumers Union, the National Council of Churches, the National Rifle Association, and the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights also joined forces in voicing their strong dissent not only to the new regulations, but with the very faulty process that led to their adoption. Indeed, when the Court of Appeals in Philadelphia rejected the rules in 2004, it strongly criticized the FCC for the process that led to the Commission's adoption of numerous "arbitrary and capricious" rules and for failing to disclose parts of the new rules for public comment. We urge you not to repeat the mistakes of the past by fully engaging the public in the new rulemaking process.

While we were pleased to learn that the FCC is planning to upgrade its website and schedule meetings to respond to public interest in its Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) on media ownership, we strongly believe that this does not go far enough. Indeed, the FCC has the opportunity and the responsibility to get it right this time by scheduling an extensive, national series of town hall meetings during this round of discussion, both in major media markets and small rural towns, to collect empirical data and conduct a thorough analysis on the state of media ownership and consolidation. Specifically, the Commission should focus on how media consolidation is affecting localism, diversity, and competition in television, radio, and newspaper markets across our nation today.

Furthermore, the FCC must also fully disclose all proposed rule changes and give the American people a fair chance to review and weigh in on any such proposal. Such activity should include, at the very least, another extended comment period with second visits to all of the markets targeted by the current ANPRM's town hall meetings.

The FCC's new rulemaking process will greatly affect the democratic discourse in our nation, impacting how media companies control and influence what the American public reads, sees, and hears. Access to diverse sources of information is necessary to maintain the informed citizenry that is crucial to a functioning democracy. We therefore urge the Commission to invite the greatest level of public participation possible in your deliberation of new ownership rules.

Sincerely,

Maurice Dandoy

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Doris O. Matsui

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Maxine Baucus

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