



Leadership Conference on Civil Rights

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May 12, 2008

Support S. J. Res. 28: Overturn the Federal Communications Commission's Media Ownership Rule

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the Leadership Conference on Civil Rights (LCCR), the nation's oldest, largest, and most diverse civil and human rights coalition with nearly 200 member organizations, we urge you to support the S. J. Res. 28 Resolution of Disapproval introduced by Senators Dorgan and Snowe, and co-sponsored by Senators Inouye and Stevens, which would overturn the FCC's decision to eliminate the longstanding ban on broadcast-newspaper cross-ownership.

LCCR believes in the "free market of ideas" and that the health of our nation's democracy depends on the continued existence of a diversity of viewpoints in the public domain. Diversity of voices, not merely a variety of programming is essential, which is why LCCR urged the FCC to complete a consideration of the issues of minority and small business ownership before taking up the wider media ownership issue. Last year, Senators Dorgan and Lott tried to prevent the FCC from moving too hastily on the new rules without creating a full record. They introduced legislation in December, The Media Ownership Act of 2007, S. 2332, which called on the FCC to first address issues of minority and female ownership and localism before considering new rules. Nonetheless, the FCC voted on new media ownership rules without showing how lifting the cross-ownership ban would affect minority and female ownership.

We've already seen the danger of media consolidation. Instead of local ownership with a diversity of views, we now have homogenized, cookie-cutter media divorced from local concerns. In addition, minority ownership in TV and radio has dropped substantially at a time when these populations are growing. As research conducted by Free Press shows, while Latino Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans make up one-third of the U.S. population, own only 7.2 percent of all full-power radio and TV stations. Women make up 51 percent of the U.S. population, yet own less than 6 percent of full-power commercial radio and TV stations. We believe there is a direct connection between ownership and employment, and we believe there is a direct connection between those who are employed and the content they produce.

The FCC's decision to relax the rules seriously threatens the likelihood of getting diverse viewpoints through the airwaves. The airwaves belong to the people, not to big business. Congress needs to step in to protect the airwaves against the takeover of large media conglomerates.

"Equality In a Free, Plural, Democratic Society"

Hubert H. Humphrey Civil Rights Award Dinner • May 14, 2008



The Resolution of Disapproval invalidates the rule changes adopted by the FCC. It has strong bipartisan support, including co-sponsorship from Commerce Committee Chairman Inouye and Vice Chairman Stevens. Accordingly, we are asking your support to repeal the FCC's recent decision to ease media ownership restrictions. If you have any questions, or need further information, please contact Nancy Zirkin at 202-263-2880 or Corrine Yu, LCCR senior counsel at 202-466-5670.

Sincerely,

Wade Henderson
President & CEO

Nancy Zirkin
Executive Vice President

cc: United States Senate