



NEWS

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This is an unofficial announcement of Commission action. Release of the full text of a Commission order constitutes official action.
See MCI v. FCC, 515 F 2d 385 (D.C. Circ 1974).

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COPPS CRITICIZES WILLINGNESS TO LET MEDIA CONSOLIDATION CONTINUE

Washington, DC – Commissioner Michael J. Copps reacted to Chairman Powell’s announcements today refusing to stay the recent decision to weaken its media concentration protections and substituting for such action a task force to study localism in the media.

Copps stated: “This proposal is a day late and a dollar short. It highlights the failures of the recent decision to dismantle ownership protections. To say that protecting localism was not germane to that decision boggles the mind. The ownership protections, as well as the other public interest protections that the Commission has dismantled over the past years, are all designed to promote localism, diversity and competition. We should have heeded the calls from over 2 million Americans and so many Members of Congress expressing concern about the impact of media concentration on localism and diversity *before* we rushed to a vote. We should have vetted these issues before we voted. Instead, we voted; now we are going to vet. This is a policy of ‘ready, fire, aim!’

“We now hear that there may be localism issues after all. But what’s going to happen while we study localism over the next year? The answer is: deals, deals and more deals. The answer is more standardized and homogenized programming. The answer is more indecency on the people’s airwaves. The answer is less diversity of viewpoint and less coverage of local issues. By refusing to stay our rules, we guarantee a rash of mergers, acquisitions and swaps that cannot be undone because the genie will be out of the bottle long before this new task force reports. While we study, Big Media conglomerates will gobble up still more local stations and licenses will be renewed without examining how stations are serving their local communities. While promoting low-power radio stations is a welcome step and one that I support, the real news is that the Big Media ‘Gold-Rush’ is still on.

“You cannot use a blanket of study to quell the fire of public outrage about increasing control of the public’s airwaves by fewer and fewer conglomerates. I don’t believe this diversionary tactic will divert either the American people or their representatives in Congress. What if we complete these studies and find out that localism is not served by consolidation? It’ll be too late. Localism is a serious, serious issue that I looked at in hearings around the country. If the majority here at the Commission now agrees this is a serious issue, why not put the new rules on ice while we do this study?”

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