

**REMARKS OF
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FCC HEARING ON MEDIA OWNERSHIP
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Thank you all for coming today. I'll keep this short because I came here primarily to listen to you.

I just want to emphasize what is at stake here. Our media is precious. It's how, outside of our strictly personal spheres, we speak to each other, inform each other, learn from each other, entertain each other, how we govern ourselves, and—yes—come to know ourselves as individuals and members of a larger society. Media is the most powerful enterprise we have. If we are smart about it, our media will reflect the genius, the creativity and the diversity of our great country. We will see to it that the people's airwaves truly reflect and truly enhance the talents and aspirations of all of us.

Today we discuss media, the country's most powerful sector, in media's great capital city, Los Angeles. This city is the beating heart of content creation in America. Media is this city's most important and influential product, and this city stands above all others in its influence over media. So if anyone can tell us what is going right and what is going wrong today, it is the creative content producers and diverse citizens that call this place home.

Three years ago, under Chairman Michael Powell, and over the objections of Commissioner Adelstein and me, the FCC severely cut back—some would say eviscerated—the rules meant to check Big Media's seemingly endless appetite for more consolidation. The agency did so under cover of night, without seeking the input of the American people. Can you imagine that—authorizing a sea change in how news and entertainment are produced without even involving the citizens who rely on those products every day?

It was a near-disaster for America. Thankfully, the American public rose up across the land—sending nearly three million e-mails and letters in opposition to the FCC. Congress rose up, too, and then a federal court sent the rules back to us, saying they were badly flawed. That was good. It was, in fact, a huge victory, showing that concerned citizens can still make a difference.

But now we're back at square one. It's all up for grabs. And if we are going to do a better job this time around, it's going to be because of input from folks like you. I travel all across the country, whenever I can, to attend local hearings on the state of the media organized by all kinds of citizens' groups. Let me tell you, I learn a whole lot more there than I would sitting behind my desk in Washington. So I thank Chairman Martin for holding today's event and my colleagues for attending. I hope they will continue to attend forums like this one in many other communities around the country.

This afternoon's panel is going to be speaking about the challenges creative content producers face in today's media environment. What a perfect L.A. topic. I know the creativity is here. My question is whether it can get access to the public airwaves. And I want to emphasize those last two words—*public airwaves*. They belong to you and me and every person in this country, not to any corporation or conglomerate. We allow broadcasters to use the airwaves—for free—in return for offering programs that serve the public interest. We want to find out from you whether they're serving your interests and, if not, what the FCC can do to fix it.

By the way, serving the public interest means the public interest of *everyone* in this great land. Some among us see our diversity as a problem to be overcome; I say our diversity is an opportunity to be harnessed. It's our strength; it's who we are and it's what we can be. This city contains a multitude of races, religions, traditions and stories. We need all these perspectives on whether the public airwaves here in L.A. are being used to reflect those traditions and stories, or whether they only distort and caricature them.

Finally, we are also here to learn about localism. Locally-owned newspapers, TV news, and radio used to be the rule and not the exception. Then some companies got the idea of building great empires from sea to sea—and they had the political muscle to get it done. Sometimes these companies put their business plans ahead of the public interest. The latest twist is that a few of them are starting to doubt whether those business plans made sense in the first place. Yet they continue to beat the drums for more consolidation. It might be amusing if it weren't so sad. The consequences are surely no joke—local newsrooms devastated by job cuts, local citizens despairing about the state of the news, and minorities shut out of America's most powerful industry.

To me, these questions about our media are as important as any I know. Thank you for coming here to help us answer them. I pledge to you every effort I am capable of to encourage a media environment that works for every person in this hall today.