



# 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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## **COMMISSIONER ADELSTEIN COMMENDS THE CENTER FOR MEDIA DEMOCRACY AND FREE PRESS FOR ITS CONTINUED STUDY REGARDING VIDEO NEWS RELEASES**

Washington, DC. – In connection to the Center for Media Democracy and Free Press' second video news release study, " Still Not the News: Stations Overwhelmingly Fail to Disclose VNRs," Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein issues the following statement:

Many broadcasters are apparently ignoring the FCC and their own ethics guidelines in running VNRs without disclosure. All the warnings in the world don't help if nobody's listening. When the flock ignores the shepherd, it's time to build a fence. Since the industry is patently incapable of self-regulation, it's up to the FCC to enforce our disclosure rules.

Some stations have developed such an ingrained pattern of running VNRs that even a direct investigation by the FCC isn't enough to snap them out of it. Maybe some have run so many red lights it seems like the normal way to drive. It's time to start handing out citations.

This is not a First Amendment issue. Newsrooms are not allowed under the law to run commercials disguised as news without an honest and adequate disclosure. Clearly, the embarrassment of informing viewers they are merely transmitting corporate propaganda in lieu of real news is leading many to actually eliminate disclosure supplied by the VNR producer. The issue is not free speech -- it is identifying who is actually speaking.

No wonder the public is having a hard time distinguishing between news and propaganda. Americans have a legal right to know that what appear to be independent news reports are actually bought and paid for by a private corporation. Broadcasters need to provide disclosures so viewers

can make up their own minds about the story. Stations that fail to disclose who is behind these stories show a lack of respect for their viewers, as well as the FCC and the broadcast industry's ethics guidelines.

We need to investigate these new allegations and get them completed quickly.

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