

**REMARKS OF
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Half a trillion dollars. That's a conservative valuation of the airwaves that our country lets TV and radio broadcasters use—*for free*. Any way you slice it, that's an awful lot of money. In fact, it's just about the biggest chunk of change that our government gives to *any* private industry.

And what do the American people—who own the public airwaves, by the way—get in return? Too little news, too much baloney passed off as news. Too little quality entertainment, too many people eating bugs on reality TV. Too little local and regional music, too much brain-numbing national play-lists. Too little of America, too much of Wall Street and Madison Avenue. That's what we get for half a trillion dollars. It's one hell of a bad bargain, don't you think?

I don't know about you. But I'm sick of this bargain and I'm sick of playing defense. So I'm not here tonight to talk just about defeating bad new media ownership rules—although we still need to do that. I'm here to say it's time that we all get off our duffs with a real agenda. Let's get rid of the bad *old rules* that got us into this mess in the first place. And let's go on from there to bring tough—I'm talking *really tough* here—public interest obligations back to those who use the spectrum you own.

Here's one way we can shift from defense to offense—one way to demand that the nation's media moguls hold up their end of the bargain with the American people.

I'm here to propose that we replace the bad old bargain that past FCCs struck with the media moguls with a new American Media Contract. It goes like this. We, the American people have given broadcasters free use of the nation's most valuable spectrum, and we expect something in return. We expect this:

- 1. A right to media that strengthens our democracy**
- 2. A right to local stations that are *actually local***
- 3. A right to media that looks and sounds like America**
- 4. A right to news that isn't canned and radio playlists that aren't for sale**
- 5. A right to programming that isn't so damned bad so damned often**

And, by the way, you have already paid for this with the half trillion dollars you gave the media giants—so you deserve all this on *free-over-the-air TV and radio*.

Are any of you in this room getting all five of these today? I didn't think so. If you aren't getting them today, are you ready to go out and fight for them, starting now?

Here's how: First, let's make sure the FCC backs off any further loosening of the few media ownership protections we still have. This is not the time for more duopolies, triopolies and sweetheart newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership deals that strangle localism, diversity and competition.

Second, let's make FCC license approval and renewal into more than a paper tiger. That means enforcing the American Media Contract every time a media company comes in to renew a license or get a new one. No more postcard license renewals—but instead a requirement for license-holders to *prove* they are fulfilling the Contract.

Third, give minorities a seat at the media table. Wait a minute—a seat at the table? Why can't they *own* the table? Thirty per cent of our population cannot be consigned to owning three per cent of our broadcast outlets—not unless we want another century of equal opportunity sham and shame.

Fourth, expand the number of media outlets in each community. That means more support for Low Power, PEG programmers and community wireless—movements that defend the last bastions of localism as Big Media marches toward one-size-fits-all national programming and distribution.

Fifth, protect *new* forms of media from the awful consolidation that ensnared traditional media. The Internet can be truly transformative—or it can become another network monopoly. Does everyone here tonight support Network Neutrality?

It's up to you and me, brothers and sisters. Things aren't going to change without you. They can change with you. You beat Michael Powell's Rules for Media Catastrophe three years ago. Who thought that would happen? Who says citizen action can't succeed in America? I see so much enthusiasm here in Memphis this week. I've seen it all across the country, in blue states and red, among liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans. At hearings wherever we go, my colleague Jonathan Adelstein and I talk with people who are just plain out of patience with a status quo that serves them so poorly; angry about what they get for half a trillion dollars; and telling us with a new urgency to do something about it. We accept that charge. We welcome it. And now, with you, it's time to take it a step further. Together, we're going to guarantee that our airwaves serve their masters—we, the people. It's all there in the American Media Contract. Take that Contract down to your broadcasters and let them know you expect them to follow it. Go out and talk about it, write about it, sing about it, blog about it. Sign up everyone you can and let your representatives know how much this means to you. Act like your future depends on it—because it does!

This may actually be one of those wonderful moments in our nation's passage when great things can actually be accomplished. And you in this audience—advocates, students, academics, public officials, journalists, musicians, entrepreneurs and many more—citizens all—are the agents of that change. You are the instruments to make it happen. And when Free Press and all of us come together again in a forum like this, we can celebrate something awesome. It's called media democracy. All in favor, say "Aye".