

**STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN  
FCC HEARING ON MEDIA OWNERSHIP  
TAMPA, FLORIDA**

**APRIL 30, 2007**

It is great to be in the Sunshine State for the FCC's fourth official media ownership hearing. Over the past several months, we have visited California, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania to hear how the public feels about the state of broadcast media ownership and related issues in their communities. Thank you for coming out today to tell us about what the media in Tampa Bay is doing right, what areas need improvement, and specifically what the Commission can do to help. You are the ones that are directly affected by the decisions we make about how many media outlets a single company can own and control in your local community. Your opinion really matters.

Tampa Bay is not only the largest media market in Florida. It is also the 12th largest television market and the 19th largest radio market in the nation. Like other media markets, a handful of companies dominate Tampa Bay television and radio. In television, two media companies control half of total revenue. In radio, three companies own almost half of all commercial radio stations in the Tampa market and control nearly 90 percent of the market's radio revenue. In addition, only four companies control 73 percent of Tampa's local news market, and one of those companies alone controls one third of the market. As alarming as these numbers are, Tampa is better positioned than many of the major markets in the country based on today's very concentrated standards. You are one of the few markets with two viable major daily, local newspapers.

It is the Commission's job to implement your right to a diverse media market, and your right to receive, share and exchange a diversity of news, information, and music. Our ownership rules are supposed to nurture, promote and maximize competition, localism and diversity – not just preserve the bare minimum. What better way to find out whether the media is fulfilling your expectations of the American people and their obligations under the law than to go out and listen to what you have to say.

Despite disagreements over the Commission's regulations, there should be no disagreement that media ownership is really about democracy. And fundamental to it is the "uninhibited marketplace of ideas," where everyone has a right to receive, share and exchange a diversity of news, information, and music. By controlling the information you receive and shaping public discourse, media companies influence our culture, politics, and ideas in a very powerful way.

I applaud your efforts, as concerned citizens of the Tampa Bay area, to come out here this evening to express your thoughts and to learn more about our nation's media industry. The airwaves belong to you, the people, and as the Supreme Court so clearly expressed: "it is the right of the public to receive suitable access to social, esthetic, moral and other ideas and experiences."

Media consolidation is not only a problem affecting Tampa, it also impacts the state and the nation. Nationally, five media conglomerates control 80 percent of the primetime market. The Commission's last effort in 2003 to modify our ownership rules would have only made the situation worse. Rather than owning 73 percent of the Tampa market local news market, the top four firms would have likely increased their share to nearly 85 percent. Luckily, three million citizens nationwide from the far left to the far right and virtually everyone in between voiced their opposition to our reckless rules. And in 2004, the federal court did too, sending the rules back to the Commission, and chastising us for failing to consider how the proposed rules would affect minority and women ownership, competition and localism. I could not agree more with their opinion. I hope that this time around, with your help, we can get these media ownership rules right.

I fully realize that the media landscape is evolving and our rules should keep up with the times. But the idea that further concentration of ownership in broadcasting is the only way for media companies to meet the demands of Wall Street investors is far too limited. It is easy to say, "we need to own more outlets." But repurposing one local newspaper story on the radio and TV does very little for quality journalism, diversity and localism, and it harms small business competitors, the backbone of the American economy. The much more difficult goal is to diversify, innovate and become competitive on new media platforms. To date, media outlets have sometimes been slow to respond to this changing landscape. And frankly, it is wrong to blame ownership rules that are intended to protect the public interest as the reason for the failure to develop profitable business models on new platforms. I am pleased that traditional media companies are now creating a more dynamic online presence, but they have more work ahead of them.

The fact of matter is that broadcasting still dominates the media today. In the 2006-2007 seasons, broadcasters – not cable, satellite or Internet programmers – had the top 200 highest rated programs on television. And all but a handful of the top 500 programs were on broadcast television. On the radio, the two satellite radio companies have a total of about 16 million subscribers and 50 million American last used the Internet for music, while over 240 million people listen to terrestrial radio on a weekly basis.

Broadcast radio and television continue to have a powerful influence over our culture, political system, and the ideas that inform our public discourse. Study after study has shown that broadcasting is still the dominant source of not just entertainment programming, but also local news and information. The broadcast industry still produces, disseminates, and ultimately controls the news, information, and entertainment programs that most inform the discourse, debate, and the free exchange of ideas that is essential to our participatory democracy.

Local news websites still do not provide a viable source of competition to traditional broadcast outlets, especially cross-owned outlets. A study of the Tampa market by Free Press found that independent Web sites in Tampa do not produce nearly enough original news, attract enough audience or generate enough revenue to compete

effectively with traditional news media outlets and websites. The study shows that only three percent of the stories on independent, Tampa-focused Web sites contained original reporting of any kind on “hard” news topics such as crime, education and local government or politics. And just last week, a Wall Street Journal/NBC poll found that despite the major efforts undertaken by political campaigns to get their message across on the Internet, only two percent of those polled said they get most 2008 election news from blogs or candidate Web sites.

This hearing is about the Tampa media market and the Commission’s media ownership rules. By law the Commission is responsible for promoting diversity and localism and preventing undue concentration of power in the media industry. You deserve what the law already requires — programming that serves the unique needs of your local communities. Before drafting any media ownership rules, we wanted to hear what those outside of Washington, DC have to say. We came to Tampa to hear from you about what we can do better to serve your needs and the public interest. We are anxious to listen to what you have to say.