



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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JOINT STATEMENT BY COMMISSIONERS COPPS AND ADELSTEIN ON CHAIRMAN MARTIN'S CROSS-OWNERSHIP PROPOSAL

This is portrayed as a moderate proposal, but it is a wolf in sheep's clothing. Don't let the wool be pulled over your eyes. The proposal could repeal the ban in every market in America, not just the top twenty. Any city, no matter how small, could be subjected to newspaper broadcast ownership combinations under a very loose standard.

Under Chairman Martin's plan, all markets will be open to one company combining broadcast properties with cable, the newspaper (already a monopoly in most places), even the Internet Service Provider. His proposal could propel a frenzy of competition-stifling mergers across the land. He can try to characterize his plan as affecting only the "largest markets," but consider:

- The top 20 markets account for *over 43%* of U.S. households. Even on its face, this proposal directly affects over 120 million Americans.
- The Chairman then creates a loophole that Big Media will drive a truck through, permitting a newspaper-broadcast combination in *any market in the country*. We have seen how loosely the Commission has granted waivers in the past. If this proposal goes through, the FCC could grant cross-ownership applications in such small towns as Meridian, Mississippi and Bend, Oregon. When big conglomerates can't get their way in a general rule, they press for loopholes that swallow the rule, and they would succeed with this approach.
- The non-top four stations that major newspapers will now be competing for are precisely the stations more likely to be owned by small, independent broadcasters. If we ever got serious about women and minority ownership, these are also the stations most available to them. Chairman Martin's rule pretty much reserves these outlets for the big guys. So this proposal actually *perpetuates* the shamefully low levels of minority and female media ownership.

The Martin rules are clearly not ready for prime time. Under the Chairman's timetable, we count 19 working days for public comment. That is grossly insufficient. The American people should have a minimum of 90 days to comment, just as many Members of Congress have

requested. More importantly, the Commission has yet to finish its Localism proceeding, teed up four years ago, or to forward comprehensive ideas to increase women and minority ownership of broadcast outlets.

There is still time to do this the right way. Congress and the thousands of American citizens we have talked to want a thoughtful and deliberate rulemaking, not an alarming rush to judgment characterized by insultingly short notices for public hearings, inadequate time for public comment, flawed studies and a tainted peer review process – all designed to make sure that the Chairman can deliver a generous gift to Big Media before the holidays. For the rest of us: a lump of coal.

We realize there is some urgency with respect to the Tribune transaction. The Chairman, however, has refused to act on Tribune's waiver requests that would permit the transaction to close. Let us be clear: it is improper to hold the Tribune hostage in order to force a vote on media ownership before the end of the year. We are prepared to vote on the Tribune waiver requests within three working days after the Chairman circulates a draft decision. There is simply no excuse for using Tribune as a human shield.