

February 25, 2014

The Honorable Tom Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington DC, 20554

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Dear Chairman Wheeler:

I am writing to express my concern about the Commission's proposed "Multi-Market Study of Critical Information Needs" (CIN). While I am pleased that your office has chosen to temporarily suspend this study, I am deeply troubled that the Commission would even contemplate such actions in the first place.

As I understand it, under the CIN as originally proposed, FCC representatives would have interviewed journalists, anchors, and producers about the stories they choose to cover, and the manner in which those stories were reported. As FCC Commissioner Ajit Pai noted in a recent *Wall Street Journal* article, the FCC would have been engaged in questioning news station personnel about their "news philosophy," and about editorial discretion and decision-making. Given the fact that the FCC is also tasked with evaluating broadcast license applications, it is not a stretch to imagine that newsrooms would seek to choose and present stories in a manner that the Commission deems "appropriate."

I cannot recall a regulatory proposal more offensive to the principles of the First Amendment. A free press is central to American liberties, and allowing the executive branch to attempt to influence the news the public receives is chilling and completely unacceptable.

I recognize that your office has chosen to temporarily suspend the CIN and to revise the survey. I urge the Commission to abandon this approach altogether to ensure the Commission takes no steps to impede the First Amendment rights of news organizations or other Americans under any guise.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

cc: Mignon Clyburn, Commissioner
cc: Jessica Rosenworcel, Commissioner
cc: Ajit Pai, Commissioner
cc: Michael O'Rielly, Commissioner

