



Media Minutes
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TRANSCRIPT

Media Minutes: Top Stories of 2009

This week, Media Minutes looks at five of the most important media stories of 2009.

A New FCC in Washington

With President Barack Obama in the White House, 2009 saw a new line-up at the Federal Communications Commission. Julius Genachowski took over as chairman in June extolling the values of a “data-driven FCC.” Mignon Clyburn and Meredith Atwell Baker also joined as commissioners in the summer. Clyburn, a South Carolina utility regulator, is the daughter of House Majority Whip James Clyburn. Baker was the acting head of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration. She's the daughter-in-law of former Secretary of State James Baker.

This new commission will be tackling crucial telecommunications issues including open Internet rules, media ownership rules review, and the National Broadband Plan.

Net Neutrality: a bill and a rulemaking

The battle over the future of the Internet was reignited in 2009, with both Congress and the FCC taking up the issue of Net Neutrality, the principle that keeps Internet Service Providers from blocking or slowing websites or lawful applications on the Web

In July, Reps. Edward Markey (D-Mass.) and Anna Eshoo (D-Calif.) introduced the Internet Freedom Preservation Act of 2009 – a bill that would make Net Neutrality the law.

And in September, FCC Chairman Julius Genachowski introduced a rulemaking at the agency which received immediate praise from House speaker Nancy Pelosi, several prominent members of Congress, and President Obama. The proposed rules would codify the four open Internet principles that now guide the FCC's oversight and enforcement of communications law. The rules would codify new principles that would prohibit Internet service providers from discriminating against content or applications and ensure that

network management practices be transparent. For more information on Net Neutrality, visit www.savetheinternet.com.

Campaigns against cable news: Beck, Dobbs and CNBC

Activists waged a war on cable news programs in 2009.

Cable networks came under fire for commentary from two anchors: Lou Dobbs of CNN and Glenn Beck of Fox News channel. Dobbs drew extensive criticism for his anti-immigrant views and for giving a platform to conspiracy theory claims that President Barack Obama is not a U.S. citizen. This past fall, Presente.org and an alliance of local allies across the country founded BastaDobbs – a campaign devoted to educating the Latino community about “the threat posed by CNN’s Lou Dobbs,” and another coalition, DropDobbs.com, targeted Dobbs’ advertisers. Dobbs resigned from his program in November.

And ColorOfChange.org organized a massive boycott of advertisers for Fox’s Glenn Beck show. After Beck called President Obama a racist and claimed that the president has a “deep-seated hatred of white people,” the nonprofit organization Color of Change began calling on advertisers to stop airing their commercials on Beck’s show. Their efforts have paid off: 80 advertisers, including GEICO, Procter & Gamble, Applebee’s and General Mills pulled their ads from the program.

LPFM in the House

It’s been ten years since Congress restricted Low-Power FM radio stations to mostly rural communities, but 2009 looks to be the turning point that could change all that. Just before breaking for the holiday recess, the House of Representatives passed the Local Community Radio Act. The bill, which would allow non-profit organizations like colleges and community groups the chance to own and operate their own radio stations, has been introduced in the previous three congressional sessions, but never made it to the full House floor.

LPFM advocates are now looking towards the Senate in 2010 to pass the bill, which has already moved unanimously out of committee. To learn more about local radio visit www.prometheusradio.org.

Comcast/NBC – The Mega Media Merger’s a Media Health Hazard

Comcast, the largest cable and residential broadband provider in the country, announced in late November that they are going to purchase a controlling stake in NBC Universal, one of the largest media companies in the world.

If approved by federal regulators, this merger would create a media behemoth that reaches hundreds of millions of homes and stretches across content production and distribution, movie and television studios and broadcast television stations.

The merger, which will be the first deal of its scope and size under the Obama administration, is strongly opposed by public interest and consumer groups. Free Press is organizing public opposition to the merger and coordinating an effort to call on Washington to ensure that the deal gets a thorough review by regulators. To find out more, visit www.freepress.net/comcast.

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