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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-3405

October 18, 2007

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The Honorable Kevin J. Martin  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Martin,

We write regarding the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) rule-making on public interest limits for media ownership. Given that the vast majority of Americans continue to get their news and information from local newspapers and television, this issue is as relevant now as ever.

We understand that you may soon decide to move forward with a ruling in this proceeding. Yet we do not believe the Commission has adequately studied the impact of media consolidation on local programming. As we've written to you in the past, we firmly believe that the FCC must first establish that there are sufficient mechanisms in place to ensure that the broadcasters are serving their local communities before considering any changes that would relax the existing rules governing media ownership. We have requested that you not fold the localism proceeding into the ownership review. The localism proceeding should be distinct and should be done prior to a review of ownership rules.

Unfortunately, you have maintained the localism proceeding as part of the larger ownership review, even despite the emergence of an unreleased localism study by the FCC finding more local news coverage by locally owned stations. We believe this withheld study should have persuaded you that localism merits a separate proceeding and should be finished before the larger review. We understand that you are reviewing the comments submitted on localism and will complete a separate report on localism, but this is not enough for an item of its significance. We again ask that you separately finish the localism inquiry, provide a report on localism with recommendations through a notice of proposed ruling, and allow public comment on this separate proceeding for at least 90 days on the findings of this report. This must be done prior to moving forward with the ownership proceeding.

The FCC should not rush forward and repeat mistakes of the past. We applaud this Commission for its efforts to include the public through a series of hearings around the country. However, we understand there have been a series of problems with the process, including the selection of study authors, the peer review and the brief length of the studies comment period, which give us additional cause for concern. In addition, the Commission has also failed to adequately address the question of media concentration's impact on the growth of minority and female ownership of broadcast stations.

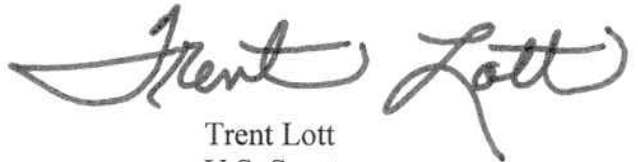
The Commission is under considerable scrutiny with this proceeding. Its last attempt at changing media ownership rules met with Congressional opposition and a reversal in a federal appeals court on both process and substantive grounds. This dubious track record makes it all the more imperative that this FCC conducts a transparent and thorough process and reaches a judicious decision.

We look forward to hearing from you about a separate localism proceeding with sufficient time for public review. And we strongly encourage you to slow down and proceed with caution, maintaining the public interest goals of localism, diversity and competition as top priorities.

Sincerely,



Byron L. Dorgan  
U.S. Senator



Trent Lott  
U.S. Senator

Cc:

Commissioner Michael J. Copps  
Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein  
Commissioner Deborah T. Tate  
Commissioner Robert M. McDowell