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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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November 5, 2007  
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## **Civil Rights Leaders Unite Against Media Consolidation**

*21 groups send letter to FCC urging immediate action on media diversity crisis*

LOS ANGELES – Leaders from across the civil rights community are calling on Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Kevin Martin to immediately address the lack of minority broadcast ownership in the United States.

Twenty-one groups – including the National Hispanic Media Coalition, Rainbow PUSH, National Council of La Raza, Urban League, League of United Latin American Citizens, Hip Hop Caucus, and National Association of Hispanic Journalists – asked the FCC to create an independent task force to study the media diversity crisis before moving forward with any new media ownership rules.

In the letter, the groups write: “We are alarmed by recent reports indicating that you will not wait until the work of such a task force is completed before issuing new rules that may permit further media consolidation. This is not acceptable. An uninformed rush to eliminate ownership limits may set back the expansion of minority ownership by a generation and leave us little recourse.”

The letter follows news that Chairman Martin is pushing for a vote to relax media ownership rules by Dec. 18. The FCC is reviewing longstanding regulations that prohibit a company from owning both a newspaper and a television or radio station in the same city.

The full text of the letter is included below:

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

Dear Chairman Martin:

We are writing to call on the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to address the issue of minority ownership. Assembled together here as leaders of minority communities speaking with one voice, we request the creation of an independent task force to conduct a specific inquiry into the impact of market concentration on female and minority ownership *before* moving forward with issuing any new ownership rules for broadcast media. On its face, the Commission's movement toward eliminating media ownership limits appears to severely undercut its statutory and moral obligation to promote minority ownership of broadcast stations. The failure of the FCC to even acknowledge this contradiction is deeply troubling, and this letter is intended to highlight the problem and propose a course of action.

We appreciate that you are open to the idea of creating a task force to thoroughly study the policy goal of promoting minority ownership of broadcast stations. But we are alarmed by recent reports indicating that you will not wait until the work of such a task force is completed before issuing new rules that may permit further media consolidation. This is not acceptable. An uninformed rush to eliminate ownership limits may set back the expansion of minority ownership by a generation and leave us little recourse.

The Commission already labors under a credibility deficit on this issue. Minority ownership is in crisis precisely because the FCC has long neglected to consider the issue as a critical public policy goal. The frustration is not limited to our community. The U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals admonished the FCC for failing to address the issue of minority ownership. The available evidence indicates cause for deep concern. According to the best available independent research—which, unfortunately, has never been duplicated by the Commission—women and minorities own broadcast stations at roughly one-tenth the level of their representation in the population. This statistic should have set off alarm bells long ago. We simply cannot understand how this is not a top priority for your agency.

Yet for many years, the FCC has failed in its responsibility to examine or address the impact of market consolidation on communities of color and broadcasters of color. The Commission has never even managed to conduct an accurate count of its own data on the race and gender characteristics of licensees to determine the true number of women and minority owners. Economists hired this year by the Commission to study the problem were unable to do so because the data provided to them was unusable. They wrote: "*The data currently being collected by the FCC is extremely crude and subject to a large enough degree of measurement error to render it essentially useless for any serious analysis.*" Without this information, it is impossible to have an adequate understanding of how different policies governing media ownership in general would impact minority ownership specifically.

We call upon the FCC to elevate its commitment to the promotion of minority ownership. The Commission should create a task force on the issue which would, at the very least, conduct the simple steps that the agency has inexplicably failed to accomplish to date. First, the task force should ensure that an accurate accounting of the FCC's data is conducted on the actual number of minority and female broadcast station owners. Second, the task force should perform an analysis on this *accurate* data set to determine the likely impact of policies which permit further media consolidation, policies which tighten ownership limits, and policies which may offer incentives for expanding minority ownership. Only when the work of this task force is completed should the FCC move forward with any changes to the rules

governing media ownership. Only when it is well armed with the facts and analysis provided by this task force can the Commission expect to determine the appropriate policies which will further the goal of increasing minority broadcast ownership.

The legacy of race and gender discrimination in the broadcast industry is a disgraceful reality in America today. It is not a problem that will be solved quickly or easily. But we must take the first step by truly understanding the nature and scope of our present crisis. History will not excuse ignorance as a justification for policies that further depress the level of minority ownership. We ask that the Commission take adequate steps to ensure that it makes the right choices to reach a long overdue justice on the issue of minority ownership in the broadcast media.

Most sincerely,

Rainbow PUSH  
National Hispanic Media Coalition  
National Council of La Raza  
Asian American Justice Center  
Hip Hop Caucus  
National Congress of Black Women  
Native Public Media  
National Institute for Latino Policy  
Urban League  
Industry Ears  
League of United Latin American Citizens  
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund  
National Association of Hispanic Journalists  
Independent Spanish Broadcasters Association  
Black Leadership Forum  
Cuban American National Council  
Latino Literacy Now  
National Association of Hispanic Publications  
National Association of Latino Independent Producers  
Latino Gerontological Center  
National Coalition on Black Civic Participation

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*The National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC) is a 21-year old non-profit civil rights and advocacy organization created to 1) improve the image of American Latinos as portrayed by the media; 2) increase the number of American Latinos employed in all facets of media; and 3) advocate for media and telecommunications policies that benefit the Latino community. For more information go to [www.nhmc.org](http://www.nhmc.org).*