



December 4, 2007

Dear Representatives:

On behalf of Free Press and our more than 350,000 members and activists, I write to urge you to co-sponsor the *Broadcast Licensing in the Public Interest Act* being introduced by Congresswoman Anna G. Eshoo that seeks to restore critical public interest obligations for our nation's broadcasters.

The Communications Act of 1934 requires the broadcast licensees to serve the "public interest, convenience, and necessity" in exchange for their use of a scarce public asset -- the airwaves -- for free. As public trustees, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has found that broadcasters must provide reasonable access to candidates for federal elective office to enhance our nation's political discourse, to provide a minimum amount of children's educational programming, and to serve local civic, informational, minority and disability needs of the public.

However, forces of consolidation over the past decade have greatly diminished any meaningful fulfillment of public interest obligations on the part of the broadcast licensees. The trends of horizontal conglomeration and vertical integration in the broadcast industry have led to drastic reduction in the amount of independently produced programming, a reduction in local public affairs coverage, and diminished reporting on local candidate races. As television broadcasters prepare for their transition to digital television in 2009, Congress has a unique opportunity to improve broadcasters' service to the public by enhancing diversity of viewpoints, promoting civic participation, and expanding local, community and children's programming.

The *Broadcast Licensing in the Public Interest Act* provides critical steps in restoring the public interest standard. The bill reduces the terms of a broadcast license from eight years to three and instructs the FCC to require broadcasters to demonstrate dedication to covering civic affairs of the community, local news gathering, local production of programming, quality educational programming, and electoral coverage. We therefore strongly urge you to support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ben Scott", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Ben Scott  
Policy Director  
Free Press  
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