



How Media Mergers Undermine Free Speech, Creativity and Media Independence

- Media consolidation is [bad for free speech and media independence](#). It results in job losses for journalists and creatives, stifling free expression and viewpoint diversity.
- Federal and state officials have power to review mergers and prevent consolidation. The Department of Justice (“DOJ”) and state attorneys general can assess transactions for violations of antitrust law. The Federal Communications Commission (“FCC”) can decide whether a merger serves the public interest.
- While stringent and good-faith government review of these deals would be a good thing, a 2025 [Free Press analysis](#) finds that the Trump administration has repeatedly violated the First Amendment and abused its regulatory powers to coerce media companies to curb coverage critical of the administration.
- Paramount’s [rumored](#) takeover of Warner Bros. Discovery would trigger a DOJ antitrust investigation, but not an FCC review because there are no broadcast licenses in play. The Warner Bros. Discovery portfolio includes a tremendous number of studio and entertainment assets, as well as cable news network CNN that is a frequent target of Trump’s ire and threats.
- Trump appointees are likely to exploit this deal to exert more editorial control over Paramount and Warner Bros. Discovery. This administration has [flexed its regulatory power repeatedly](#) to coerce media entities seeking merger approvals to tone down or eliminate coverage critical of President Trump.
- For instance, before the Ellison family’s Skydance purchased Paramount/CBS earlier this year, Trump-appointed FCC Chair Brendan Carr launched an investigation into CBS and *60 Minutes* that his predecessor had dismissed as an attempt “to weaponize the licensing authority of the FCC in a way that is fundamentally at odds with the First Amendment.”
- The FCC approved the Skydance/Paramount merger in a 2-1 vote, but only after Paramount paid President Trump \$16 million to settle a meritless lawsuit and agreed to appoint a former Trump ambassador as a “bias monitor” who can censor content critical of the administration. In her [dissent](#), FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez decried the “never-before-seen forms of government control over newsroom decisions and editorial judgment—actions that violate both the First Amendment and the law.”
- When Chairman Carr famously called for ABC/Disney and other broadcasters to censor Jimmy Kimmel, he received bipartisan criticism. Numerous lawmakers, including Republican Senators John Thune, Ted Cruz, and Mitch McConnell, expressed concern. “We can do this the easy way or the hard way,” Carr said, inspiring Cruz to [call](#) Carr’s actions “dangerous” and “right out of *Goodfellas*.” The protests and outpouring of opposition have slowed and delegitimized Chairman Carr’s agenda, but even after Kimmel went back on air Carr [continued to threaten](#) broadcasters over viewpoints the president disfavors.



- Carr's threats provoked the largest broadcaster in the nation, Nexstar, to say it would not air Kimmel on its ABC affiliate stations even before Disney/ABC suspended him. Nexstar is seeking FCC approval of its takeover of the fourth largest broadcaster in the country, Tegna, which did not pull Kimmel. Nexstar has [repeatedly capitulated](#) to the administration as it seeks FCC merger approval. The deal [violates](#) both FCC rules and federal law, but the company hopes for waivers or other special treatment from Carr.
- We can successfully oppose media consolidation and these threats to press freedom. Paramount's pursuit of Warner Bros. Discovery presents an opportunity for free speech activists to appeal to state attorneys general who have authority to review such matters. Indeed, California AG Rob Bonta recently [expressed concern](#) about the deal. He and other state AGs could file suit to block the merger. And even if they don't sue, their diligent review sends a message to Wall Street that media mergers will receive real scrutiny.
- Other strategies exist to effectively defend free speech and stem media consolidation too. We've learned that when we mobilize people to speak out we can defend our freedoms, curb government overreach and protect media diversity and independence. During the first Trump administration, against all odds, Free Press [stopped](#) a mega merger between two media behemoths. It can be done, but we need your help!

Take Action: Protect Free Speech – Oppose Media Consolidation and Capitulation

Free Press is leading legal, research and advocacy strategies to protect free speech and stop media consolidation. Here's how you can help:

1. Speak out against government attacks on free speech and abuses of power. Share Free Press' content on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [TikTok](#) and help us continue to build broad support for free speech and against media consolidation.
2. Become a Free Press member by signing an [online petition](#), texting [freepress](#) to 78748 or [donating](#) to support our work. We'll keep you updated about opportunities to stand up for First Amendment rights and against media consolidation.
3. Support FCC Commissioner Anna Gomez as she bravely fights for First Amendment rights from inside the government. You can follow her on Bluesky [@gomezfcc.bsky.social](#).