



Anatomy of our biggest week ever.

The past few weeks have seen some of the most crucial media policy developments in recent memory. This has been one of the busiest—and most exciting—periods since Free Press started five years ago.

Stopping Media Consolidation

The rush of activity started in mid-October when a front page story in the [New York Times](#) revealed Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Kevin Martin's plan to fast track a vote on media ownership rules—one that would let the biggest media companies control even more local outlets. Despite a [massive public outcry](#) at the FCC's public hearings and [authoritative research](#) on the potential impact of weakened ownership limits, Martin is pushing changes that would accelerate corporate consolidation, destroy local newsrooms, and further aggravate our nation's [crisis](#) in media ownership by women and people of color.

With a vote planned as early as December, the time to turn up the heat on the FCC is now. We are directly challenging Martin's back-door plan with thousands of [citizen comments](#) and plenty of public pressure.

Our research department has been extra busy furnishing Congress, the FCC and grassroots groups across the country with sorely missing information about the damaging effects of media consolidation. On October 24th, research director Derek Turner [testified](#) in front of the U.S. Senate about the loss of diversity in radio ownership and programming.

On October 29th more than 100 people joined an exclusive online conversation at the new [Free Press Action Network](#) with FCC Commissioner Michael Copps who is leading the fight along with Commissioner Adelstein to slow down these massive changes.

On October 30th, we organized a massive turnout to a public hearing at the FCC, with just one week's notice. Hundreds gathered outside of the FCC as early as 4 in the morning and then joined in a rally put together by Free Press featuring the two Democratic Commissioners, Reps. Eleanor Holmes-Norton and Maurice Hinchey, Rev. Jesse Jackson, Wade Henderson of LCCR, Kim Gandy of NOW, the Teamsters and many others.



The hearing itself, held on October 31st—the 7th of 8 promised by FCC Chairman Kevin Martin before he would propose any changes to the ownership rules—was a huge success: "[Critics Turn Out To Protest Media Consolidation](#)" was the Washington Post headline the following day. NPR ran a story the next day and over the weekend. There was coverage in nearly every major news outlet. FCC Commissioners Copps and Adelstein referred to Free Press' research presented that day by Derek Turner—who testified on a panel of experts at the hearing—as a "bombshell" in the case against consolidation.



Then, on November 1st, Free Press hosted a staff briefing in the U.S. House on media ownership, and had 70 staffers show up.

On November 2nd, Free Press organized 21 minority organizations to [co-sign a letter](#) to FCC Chairman Kevin Martin demanding that he create an independent minority ownership task force before moving forward with any new media ownership rules. Never before have so many civil rights groups come together on this issue.



ACT NOW: To halt Martin in his tracks, we all need to work together to shed a bright enough spotlight on media consolidation to make him think twice before ramming through such a controversial vote.

You can do your part by encouraging your constituents and allies to [contact Congress](#) on this issue and help spread the word about the FCC's plan for media ownership rule changes through newsletter articles, e-mail blasts, blog posts, op-eds, letters to the editor, etc. We have lots of great resources

on our [StopBigMedia.com](#) Web site, including a fun Web game called "[Whack-a-Murdoch](#)"—your chance to drop the hammer on Big Media moguls and consolidation.

Making the Internet Open and Accessible

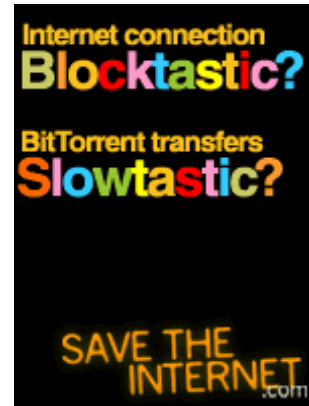
On October 30th, the House Commerce Committee approved the [Broadband Census of America Act](#), which, while wonky, is a crucial step toward getting accurate data about the declining state of broadband deployment in the United States. You have to know what's wrong to make it right, and industry is doing everything they can to manipulate the facts to protect their government-sanctioned duopoly.

On the same day, the Senate Commerce Committee also passed the bipartisan [Community Broadband Act](#). This legislation promotes universal, affordable Internet access by empowering local communities to deliver essential high-speed Internet access to all their citizens. It would overturn statewide bans on cities building their own municipal Internet networks.

In the wired world, [Comcast](#) was caught red-handed blocking the legal file-sharing service BitTorrent.

This came just weeks after [Verizon](#) blocked text messages from NARAL Pro-Choice America to its own members. And late August found [AT&T](#) blocking statements critical of President Bush from a webcast of a Pearl Jam concert. These are examples of exactly the type of censorship that Americans have warned would occur without Net Neutrality protections.

On November 1, Free Press General Counsel Marvin Ammori filed an official FCC "petition" and "complaint" against Comcast for Net Neutrality violations. We were joined by members of the SaveTheInternet.com Coalition and Internet scholars at the nation's top law schools. The filings call for urgent action to [stop Comcast](#) from blocking the transfer of data sent by a program called "Bit Torrent" over their networks. AP ran an exclusive that appeared in [hundreds of papers](#).



ACT NOW: Contact the FCC and members of Congress to [demand laws](#) that would protect the free flow of information on any platform.



Other News

On October 30th a key House Subcommittee held a hearing on recent [postal rate hikes](#) that have hammered independent publications, including some of the country's most important political journals. Six committee members expressed outrage, and indicated that they will seek relief for the publishers.

On October 30th, the Senate Commerce Committee passed the "[Local Community Radio Act](#)," which could help bring hundreds of local, Low Power FM (LPFM) radio stations to cities and suburbs across the country, offering uniquely local news, views and music programming.



2008 National Conference for Media Reform

To be held in Minneapolis on June 6-8, 2008. Registration for the conference will open in January. Check out the [NCMR Web site](#) to sign up for e-mail updates.

Join the Free Press Action Network. Tune in to Media Minutes.

Hundreds of [Free Press Action Network](#) users are creating their own blogs and participating in online discussions with guests like FCC Commissioners Jonathan Adelstein and Michael Copps, Sen. John Kerry, Rep. Hilda Solis, and Rev. Jesse Jackson. Another great way to stay up to date on media policy issues is [Media Minutes](#), our weekly five-minute podcast covering developments in media reform. Check out the new and improved show every Friday.