



## Senate Votes to Reverse FCC Decision Allowing Media Consolidation

By Josh Silver, Executive Director

On May 15<sup>th</sup>, the Senate cast a near-unanimous [vote to reverse](#) the Federal Communication Commission's December 2007 decision to let media companies own both a major TV or radio station and a major daily newspaper in the same city.

Sen. Byron Dorgan (D-N.D.), who introduced the rarely used "resolution of disapproval," said that "the FCC is supposed to be a referee for the media industry, but instead they've been cheerleaders in favor of more consolidation. ... We already have too much concentration in the media."

The Senate vote is good news for everyone who is fed up with a media system, that, in the words of Jon Stewart, is "hurting America" with propaganda pundits, embedded journalists, horse-race election coverage, and celebrity gossip posing as news. It reflects growing awareness -- in Congress and with average Americans -- of the perils of concentrated media ownership. Namely, insatiable profit pressures that gut newsrooms, replace labor-intensive investigative news with salacious, cheap-to-cover stories, and encourage the dumbing-down of the most pressing issues into 30-second sound bites and partisan shout-fests.

Media concentration is also central to the rise of extremists like Bill O'Reilly, Sean Hannity and Rush Limbaugh, who overwhelm the dial on conglomerates owned and run by businessmen with far-right politics.

Back in 2003, Senator Dorgan and then-Sen. Trent Lott (R-Miss.) passed a similar resolution of disapproval to overturn the last effort by the Bush FCC to loosen ownership limits after 3 million Americans - both liberal and conservative - decried the FCC's handout to the largest media companies. That resolution languished in the GOP-controlled House of Representatives, and the proposed rules were later rejected by a federal court.

The "newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership ban" that the FCC is trying to get rid of has been in place since 1975. It keeps media outlets from merging already stripped-down local newsrooms in the name of "synergy" and protects diversity of viewpoints in the local press, something the Supreme Court has recognized is critical to the health of our democracy. The March 15th vote sends a clear message to media executives and the FCC that further media consolidation will not be tolerated.

The resolution of disapproval now moves to the House, where it already has bipartisan support. President Bush has threatened to veto the measure. A statement from the White House yesterday called the FCC's new rules the product of "extensive public comment and consultation" but failed to mention that only 1 percent of the public that testified at public hearings or sent letters to the FCC supported the administration's position.

Typical of most Bush appointees, FCC Chairman Kevin Martin disregarded the will of the American people and granted another handout to the largest companies. A veto-proof majority in Congress supporting the resolution would stop Bush from doing the same.

The fight is far from over. But this historic vote is a victory for the public interest over one of Washington's most powerful lobbies.

**After receiving thousands of your phone calls and more than 250,000 letters, the Senate rejected the FCC's plan to let the biggest media companies get even bigger. This is truly a historic victory.**

**[Tell the House to follow in the Senate's footsteps »](#)**



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