Session 1

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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FOURTH PUBLIC HEARING
VOLUME I
(Pages 1 - 196)

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LOCATION: Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center
Louise Lykes Ferguson Hall
1010 North W. C. MacInnes Place
Tampa, Florida 33602
MODERATOR: LOUIS SIGALOS, Federal Communications Commission
Chief of The Consumer Affairs and Outreach Division, Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau
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Notary Public, State of Florida at Large

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MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much for being here, and welcome to the Federal Communications Commission's Fourth Public Hearing on Media Ownership.

First, I do want to thank the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center, who is so graciously hosting us today. And before we begin with our first panel, we do have a few opening remarks. And I'd like to start by asking the mayor, who I think is here, Pam Iorio, to come and say a few words before we move on.

MAYOR IORIO: Thank you.

Chairman Martin and Members of the FCC Commissioners, I welcome you to the City of Tampa. I know you'll have a great public hearing.

There are many members of the public here to speak and a very prestigious and respected
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panel from the media. And we welcome you to our great city.

We're so pleased that you selected Tampa as a venue to solicit public input on media ownership. I wish you well as you go on into the afternoon and on into the evening. Thanks again for visiting our city. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER COPPS: Good afternoon.

Thank you-all for welcoming us here to Tampa this afternoon. Thank you, Madam Mayor, for your cordial welcome.

As some of you know, I once lived in this wonderful area. Actually, I'm a graduate of Northeast High School in St. Petersburg. (Applause.)

That was quite a few years ago, to be sure. But the welcome we've gotten here shows that Thomas Wolfe was really wrong. You can go home again. And I am glad to be home again.

But tonight -- or today -- isn't about a stroll down memory lane. It's really about our future, yours and mine. And this meeting is part of a remarkable grass-roots dialog that began almost five years ago and which can now -- if you and I do our jobs right -- help us create a better media environment all across this land of ours.

What we're here to do is to learn from our two distinguished panels, but even more importantly, from you in this audience, how you
think this area's media is doing in serving you, because media has a solemn obligation to do that.

Because you own the airwaves -- you and you alone. No business, no broadcaster, no special interest owns an airwave in the United States of America. (Applause.) They're yours.

The broadcasters do get the privilege of using those airwaves, and in return for a license they pledge to serve the public interests, to bring you good local news, information and entertainment, to bring you a diversity of issues and cultures and viewpoints and to provide entertainment that reflects your diversity, interests and creative genius.

So I'll be looking here today to understand your history and your experiences and your satisfaction or dissatisfaction with your current media environment.

Now, I know that the Tampa-St. Petersburg area is one of a dramatically diminished number of metropolitan areas that still has two major and competing newspapers. Of course, this is a huge and diverse area with many different interests, and there's a lot here for even two newspapers to cover. And I'm interested to learn if you think that this is one big area or if it's more differentiated than that.

To me, competition in journalism is
really coined of the realm. Recently I had the privilege of appearing on a Columbia University of Journalism school panel with one of my heroes, Walter Cronkite.

He told us a little story that I -- it'll take a minute but I think it merits telling here. Because it gets to what competition in journalism means; and that, of course, includes broadcast journalism.

"My first job was with the Houston Press," Cronkite told us, "and our competitor was the Houston Chronicle. We each put out several editions a day. And each time the Chronicle put out a new edition, a copy boy ran eight blocks to its loading dock to bring back a copy, literally hot, or at least warm, off the press.

My editor would then spread it out on his desk to compare what they'd written with what I'd written. And I can still hear him holler out, "Cronkite, the Chronicle spells this guy's name S-M-Y-T-H. We've got it S-M-I-T-H. Which one is it?" Or 'The Chronicle says it was 1412 Westheimer Street. We say it was 1414. Who's right?' "That kind of check" -- and this is still Mr. Cronkite -- "that kind of check on our work several times a day sure made us better reporters.

But how many towns have that kind of newspaper competition anymore? Most towns today have only one newspaper. And the result
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is just what you'd expect. The accuracy in this reporting isn't the same anymore."

Now imagine for a moment that either the Times or the Tribune went away, and the remaining paper, now a monopoly, also owned eight radio stations, three television stations, cable channels and the largest local Internet site; what would happen to the quality of your media then? What would happen to the diversity of voices?

Right now Latinos and African-Americans in Tampa comprise almost 50 percent of the population. We need to be asking how local coverage is meeting the needs of these and many other diverse communities. My guess is we need to do a better job of it, a much better job.

You know, minorities are now nearly a third of this country's population. But people of color own just 3.2 percent of full-power commercial television stations and only about 2 percent of all the broadcast assets.

Could that be why maybe minority interests and issues don't get covered very well?

Could it be this is why minorities are so often caricatured and stereotyped in news stories?

Our media have an obligation to reflect this country's diversity. They have an obligation to nourish this country's diversity.
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And it's a job that is not getting done.

(Applause.)

Take the elderly. We don't usually think of our seniors as a minority group. But talk about a group being disadvantaged, disenfranchised by big national media. These are folks who treasure news about the communities that they live in, who value news, and actually go out and vote.

And I'm joining those senior ranks now, and I know firsthand something is missing and something has been taken away.

Getting back for a moment to the world I asked you to imagine, where there are few corporate giants owning all the major outlets; that's exactly the world that former FCC Chairman Michael Powell envisioned three years ago, when he rammed new rules through the Commission to loosen the few remaining controls we have against further consolidation.

What he didn't expect was that three million people would contact the FCC to voice their outrage. Congress joined in, and then the U.S. Court of Appeals decided those rules are badly flawed and sent them back to us -- to us here.

Lesson Number 1: Citizen in action can still make a difference and even carry the day provided, it's passionate, organized and determined (Applause.)
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Lesson Two: With the FCC having all these rules teed up again in front of us, the need for citizen vigilance is just as urgent. But there's a difference this time. We can aim higher now than three years ago. We don't need to play just defense. We can start playing offense.

We cannot only defeat bad new rules, although we still must do that, but now we're in a position to revisit some of the bad old ones that got us into this mess in the first place (Applause.)

A VOICE: Yeah. That's right.

COMMISSIONER COPPS: And we can go on from there to restore meaningful public interest responsibilities to our broadcast media.

For starters, let's go back to an honest-to-goodness licensing system that doesn't grant slam-dunk renewals but stops to ask if a license holder is really doing its job of serving the public interests (Applause.)

COMMISSIONER COPPS: All license holders have to do now is basically send in a postcard. And that's it. And let's do this license renewal every three years, the way it used to be, and not every eight years, like it is now. (Applause.)
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Let's also put what stations are doing to actually meet their public interests obligations up on the web, so citizens can know how their airwaves are being used. And then let's make sure that all this new digital capacity we're giving broadcasters return something positive for our communities and local talent and civic-issues coverage. (Applause.)

If your local broadcasters can multicast half a dozen program streams, is it too much to expect that some good portion of that be used to enhance localism and diversity? So these are the kinds of things that we all need to be talking about. And I'll bet there are some other ideas out here in this audience, too.

Let me conclude with a brief thank you to the many representatives of the community that are here today, representatives from the Latino and African-American and other communities, all kinds of community-based public interest groups, labor unions, seniors who have been disadvantaged and disenfranchised by excessive consolidation, consumers and broadcasters, too.

I am always happy when broadcasters do come out and participate in dialogues like this. I only ask my broadcaster friends to focus today on the issues at hand. We want to learn about how you're using the airwaves to enhance the public interests. And many of them
Indeed are.

But unfortunately -- and I want to say this carefully -- at a recent hearing like this, most of the broadcaster presentations focused on how they let their celebrities take time off to support worthwhile charities and how the stations donated to these charities.

Now, I love those charities. So don't misinterpret what I'm saying. Our country has a long proud history of corporate charitable giving. But that's not the issue for our attention here today. So I urge them to focus on the matters of localism and diversity and competition that's reflected in how the airwaves are used. (Applause.)

I'm sure there are other groups I've unintentionally forgotten to thank. But I'm glad all of you are here. Most of you are from Tampa-St. Petersburg. But I know others have come from across the state to this only hearing the FCC will be holding in Florida. Personally, I wish we had more such events so people wouldn't have to travel so far.

This issue of media consolidation has been my top priority since I joined the FCC six years ago. I know there are many critically important issues troubling America right now, issues of peace and war, finding and keeping good jobs, making sure families have health insurance, educating our kids, creating equal
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opportunity.
And for individual members of this audience, one of those issues may trump all of the others. But here's my message to you:

Even if media consolidation is not your number one issue, it ought to be your second most important. And that's because all of those other issues you care about are increasingly funnelled through the filter of big media.

Well, if you're happy with how your number one issue is being presented and discussed as they come through that funnel, fine, you don't have to listen to a thing I'm saying.

But if you think that that big issue might just benefit from a little more diversity of viewpoint and a little more competition, then you need to get involved. And there's no litmus test to getting involved. You could be conservative or liberal, Democratic or Republican, red state or blue state.

So I thank you-all for being here, and I look forward to hearing from you. This is an issue that I have seen take root all across this broad and diverse land of ours. It's an issue, really, of democracy. I like to call it "Media Democracy." I like the ring of that, don't you?

A VOICE: You bet.

(Applause.)
COMMISSIONER COPPS: Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Mr. Adelstein.

COMMISSIONER ADELSTEIN: Well, thank you.

It's great to be here in Tampa Bay. And I appreciate the welcome from Mayor Iorio and what a great group of panelists we have here today and, of course, most importantly, all of you for taking the time to come out.

All the many organizations that help let you know about it, thank you all so much. 'Cause it's really all about hearing from you and finding out what's happening here in Tampa Bay.

What is going right now with the media, what you think could be done better, how the decisions we make affect you. Because nobody knows better than you.

You're the best jury, you're the real experts and the people out there in this community, you listen to the radio, you watch TV, you read the newspapers. That's what we want to hear about.

I'm especially interested in hearing about how different communities feel about how their issues are treated; for example, Commission Copps talks about seniors, how older seniors feel their issues are being handled in the media.

You have a large Hispanic population here, issues of concern to -- to the way you're
being treated in ways that you consider to be sensitive to -- to the real issues with respect to responsiveness. I just want to know, are you happy with the media that you have here in Tampa Bay today.

A VOICE: No, I'm not.

COMMISSIONER ADELSTEIN: Well, that's -- we want to hear more detail. If it's yes, that's good too. But you -- it's amazing what you can say two minutes.

We've gone across the country and heard such incredible eloquent people in such a short period of time. And I know it's constricted, but we're going to stay here to listen to each and every one of you until you're done.

(Applause.)

And Tampa's not just a little media market. This is one of the biggest markets in the country and one of the biggest -- not the biggest -- but the first biggest in Florida.

And just like in other cities, large and small, across the United States, it seems from the studies that I've seen that a handful of companies dominate Tampa Bay TV and radio.

Studies show that in television, two media companies control half of the total revenue. In radio, three companies own almost half of all commercial radio stations in the Tampa market and control nearly 90 percent of
Only four companies control 73 percent of Tampa's local news market; and one of those companies alone controls a third of the market. As alarming as these numbers are, Tampa's one of the better markets in the country, if you can imagine that, in today's -- based on today's very concentrated standards. You're one of the few markets in the country, as Commission Copps mentioned, that has two big viable home newspapers. There's also a great study (sic) here on Cox ownership. I'd like to hear your views on how well the joint ownership of a newspaper and a television station is going here.

It's our job to implement your rights to diversity. That's what the rules tell us to do. That's what the law tells us to do. The Supreme Court has told us that you have the right to receive and share in diversity of news -- of news and information, music. And our ownership rules are supposed to promote competition, localism and diversity, not just preserve the bare minimum. And what better way to find out whether the media's fulfilling your expectations then to come here and talk to you about how well the media's doing. We shouldn't say that we certainly know better inside the beltway than you do about
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what's in your interests. And the law says the public interest -- that's what we're here to serve, the public interests, not the interests of the media giants that we oversee.

(Applause.)

And whatever disagreements you might hear today about the rules, certainly there should be no disagreement that this issue is really about our democracy. And fundamental to that is the "Uninhibited marketplace of ideas," as the Supreme Court called it.

And by controlling the information you receive, you really see how it impacts your culture, the politics, the ideas that get exchanged here. And the airwaves do belong to you. And you're the ones that came out to reclaim them here tonight. I'm so glad you did.

The Supreme Court expressed your right to receive suitable access to social, aesthetic, moral and other ideas and experiences. I'm quoting now from the Court. Now, everywhere you go, there's a profound impact by media consolidation, not just here in Tampa.

Nationally, you see, five media conglomerates control 80 percent of the prime-time market.

And our last attempt by -- as a Commission, in 2003, to modify the rules would've only made the situation worse; rather than only 73 percent of the Tampa market local...
news, the top firms would've likely increased
t heir share to 85 percent.

Fortunately, three million people
contacted the FCC, from the far left to the far
right and virtually everybody in between, to
say that's the wrong direction to go. And in
2004, the Federal Court agreed that sentiment,
sending the rules back to us to start from
scratch.

They said we failed to consider how the
proposed rules would affect minority and women
ownership, failed to consider the impact on

competition and localism. I couldn't agree
more. So I hope that this time around, with
your help and your input here tonight, that we
can get these media ownership rules right.

I hope -- promote minority ownership,
promote the public interest and diversity. And
I fully realize we're going to hear a good
debate tonight about how the media landscape
had been evolving and how our rules should keep
pace with the times.

But it's too easy just to say, "Oh, they
can get on the Internet" or -- or "We need to
own more outlets."

Repurposing one local newspaper story on
radio and TV doesn't do a lot for the quality
of journalism, it doesn't do anything for
diversity, and I don't think it helps localism
a bit; and it can harm the small business
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It's more difficult to diversify, be innovative, become competitive on new media platforms. But that's what we need to see media doing, rather than simply try to gobble up more and more local outlets.

And sometimes media companies have been slow to grasp this changing landscape. And, frankly, it's wrong to play the blame game on the media-ownership rules that are intended to serve the public interests as the reason for the failure to develop profitable business models on new platforms. I'm glad that these companies are trying to create new and more dynamic online presences. But they have more work ahead of them.

And the fact of the matter is that broadcasting, along with newspapers, still dominates the media today. Study after study shows that broadcasting and newspapers are the dominant source of local news and information.

And the broadcast industry still produces, disseminates, locally controls news, information and entertainment programs that most inform, the debate, the discourse and the free exchange of ideas in this country and this democracy.

Local news websites don't provide a viable source for competition, unless they're owned by these major outlets. When you look at, where do you go to when you go to the
Internet, you go to the local newspaper.com or your local TV station.com. And a study that was done by Free Press of the market here in Tampa bears that out. It found that independent websites in Tampa don't produce nearly enough original news to attract enough audience or generate enough revenue to compete effectively with the traditional news media outlets and websites. As a matter of fact, the studies show that only 3 percent of the stories on independent Tampa-focused websites contained original reporting of any kind on hard news topics, such as crime or education or what's happening in local government. And you know that from your own personal experience. There's not a lot of news there. I know people are trying. But the fact is, you've got to go to the newspaper. That's where the journalism is. People don't want to be their own editors, they don't want to be their reporters. They expect the journalists to do that for them. And that's happening nationwide. Just last week I was reading in the Wall Street Journal, an NBC Wall Street Journal poll found that despite all the efforts taken by political campaigns to try to get their message across on the Internet, only 2 percent of those polls
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said that they get most of their 2008 news from blogs or candidate websites.

Our job is to promote the public interest, not the interests of these media giants we oversee. And we've always done that by promoting diversity, localism and preventing underconcentrations of power in the media industry.

I'm saying we need to continue that tradition that has been so long held by the FCC. You deserve what the law already requires, programming that serves the unique needs of your local communities.

So before drafting any media-ownership rules, we wanted to hear from you. We wanted to come right here to Tampa and find out what you have to say. So we came here to hear from you.

So I'm going to sit down and be quiet and listen, 'cause I'm anxious to hear what you have to say. Thank you for coming out this evening or afternoon.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Commissioner Tate.

COMMISSIONER TATE: Mr. Chairman, and thank you to the Mayor, so much, for hosting us here at this beautiful Performing Arts Center and being here in the beautiful Tampa Bay Area.

And I'll be brief and just say that we are all thrilled to be here in Florida and in
one of the most thriving technology centers in the whole state as well as the largest media centers of the state.

I am one of the new commissioners. And, so, this is the first time that I've had the opportunity to be part of the hearings going around the country. And I'm looking forward to hearing from you-all, as my colleague said, about both the good and the bad.

This is one of those interesting areas where both the Tampa Tribune and the commonly-owned WFLA is one of the 40 grandfathered newspaper broadcast combinations in the country.

And, so, it does provide us a very unique opportunity to see how that's worked and see how the combinations have a positive or a negative impact.

I do want to also thank our staff. They go on the road with us, and they make all of these meetings go well and easily. And I appreciate all of their hard work.

I continue to consider the issues that are raised throughout our media-ownership proceedings with an open and inquiring mind.

And it's especially important that we do take into consideration those of you-all who represent minority communities, and especially the "I Generation," those -- those of you who are like my children, who've been raised on the
Internet, so that we hear how you receive your news information and entertainment anywhere, anytime.

The rules that we create and craft will be the rules that are with us for a long period of time. So I'll move forward. A thank you to the panel here and our second panel as well.

And I'm looking forward, especially, to hearing from those of you who've come to speak on media ownership in your communities. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Mr. McDowell.

COMMISSIONER MCDOWELL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for hosting us here in Tampa-St. Pete, the 12th largest media market in the country, home of the Buccaneers.

And being native of the Washington, D.C., area, with the performance of our football team last year, I feel your pain. But you had a great draft yesterday, so hope springs eternal.

Best of luck to you-all. I know things are going to be great for you.

In our three prior hearings on broadcast ownership in Los Angeles, California, Nashville, Tennessee, and Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, we heard the perspectives of musicians, broadcasters, reporters, actors, writers, professors, and hundreds of citizens, who are the true owners of the airwaves.
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I look forward to hearing from you this evening about how our ownership rules affect you as viewers, listeners, business people and members of this terrific Community.

The debate over broadcast ownership concerns the vitality of our democracy and the appropriate balance among competitive efficiencies, diversity of voices and local focus.

I've learned quickly, being a new commissioner along with Commissioner Tate -- not around for the last debate on this. But I've learned quickly that this debate elicits the opinions and passions of people from all walks of life, from all over America.

And we need the firsthand knowledge that only you can provide about the sources you rely upon for news, information and entertainment, so that we can analyze today's media marketplace and determine if our rules should change, and if so, how.

To our panel and our audience members, thank you for being here today and for participating in our hearing, which is really your hearing. And I will very much value your input.

And without further adieu, because I want to leave more time to hear from you-all than for you to hear from me, I'll pass it along.

Thank you.
(Applause.)

CHAIRMAN MARTIN: Good afternoon everyone. And thank you, to Tampa, for hosting us.

Actually, my father-in-law lives here in Tampa, and so we -- my family and I -- visit here frequently. And he's not very shy about complaining to us -- to me -- about the media and FCC policies. So if that's any indication, I'm sure it'll be a lively debate here tonight.

The -- as you've heard from all of the Commissioners, this is our fourth in a series of six media-ownership hearings we'll be holding. And I want to thank you-all for participating and joining us tonight.

This is a -- this is really a critical and important process, and it couldn't be accomplished without hearing from you and your active participation.

When we've had the previous hearings, both in Los Angeles and in Nashville and Harrisburg, we've had a lively -- we've had a lively debate, and I anticipate that we will, as well, tonight.

And so I, again, want to thank you-all for your public input. And that's going to be so critical as it goes forward. However, the decisions that we are going to make about ownership are very difficult, and they are as difficult as they are critical.

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And the media touches on almost every aspect of our lives. We're certainly dependent upon it for our news, our information, our entertainment. And, indeed, it's the opportunity to express diverse viewpoints that lies, really, at the heart of our democracy.

Indeed, the Commission has three core goals that are intended to further, with our media ownership rules, both competition, diversity and localism.

And I think it's going to be critical, through our review in our ownership rules, that we work to develop a record, with hearings, like the one we're having today and through the written-comment process, on which we can inform our decision making on how all three of those goals are impacted by our rules.

And with that, I am particularly pleased that we're holding a hearing here in Tampa, not only because of my personal connections, but because it does have some unique characteristics. It is the twelfth largest media market, as Commissioner McDowell referred to it.

It has 14 TV stations, a 24-hour cable news channel, numerous radio stations, numerous -- several daily newspapers and weekly newspapers.

But there's a particular interest in this
market, because it is the home of one of the
grandfathered newspaper broadcast
cross-ownership stations, so that there is --
this is the home of Media General's Tampa
Tribune and the television station WFLA.

But, in general, our rules prohibit a
company from owning a daily newspaper and
television station in the same market. But
the -- but the Third Circuit, in reviewing our
rules recently, concluded that the Commission
was correct, that the ban on the newspapers and
broadcast being owned in the same market would
no longer justify the complete prohibition.

It sent it back to the Commission for us
to try to determine what should be the rules on

this -- on this issue and what kind of market
should those -- should there be cross-ownership
that's allowed and what kind of market there
shouldn't be.

So I think it's particularly important
for us to hear from the public on this issue
today, so that we can -- we can hear about the
effect that cross-ownership has had in this
market and on -- and on the -- on all of you,
both the good and the bad. And what -- very
anxious to -- and that'll be very important for
us going forward.

So I think it is critical that we end up
hearing your thoughts and insights on this
subject, in general, and particularly on
that -- on that rule today.
Now, before -- before, we get going --

and I do want to be brief, as well -- but in
part because the -- I will only correct one
thing today that one of the other commissions
said.

Commissioner Adelstein said we would stay
in this room until everyone got a chance to be
heard. They actually will kick us out of the
room sometime between 11:00 and midnight. We

will have a place, to make sure that if
everyone hasn't a chance to be heard that
everyone will get an opportunity to
participate. But there may be a time when
they'll kick us out of this room. So I -- so I
can't promise that.

So -- but at this point, let me move --
turn it over to our moderator, who will be
moderating us. And we'll be going on to the
first panel. And I want to thank you, again,
all for participating today. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
Commissioners.

As we move to our first panel discussion,
I want to briefly review the ground rules.
Panelists, each of you will have a five minutes
for your presentation. I'll strictly enforce
the five-minute time limit in order to ensure
that we follow our agenda as closely as
possible.

We start a few minutes late, so it's even
more important. We want to provide as much
time as possible for the public-comment
discussion period.

Members of audience, please listen

respectfully to the panelists, even if you
disagree with the views that they express. I
know that the issues we're discussing today
arouse a lot of passion, but for this hearing
to run smoothly and be successful we need to
maintain basic decorum and avoid any
unnecessary interruptions. And we thank you
for that.

Our panel today features Dan Bradley,
Media General's Vice President of News for
Broadcast; Bill Carey, General Manager of
WFTS-TV and Incoming President of the Florida
Association of Broadcasters; Robert Dardenne,
Associate Professor in Journalism and Media
Studies at the University of South
Florida-St. Petersburg; Steve Erlanger,
President of Hometown News; Ronald Gordon,
President of ZGS Broadcast Holdings; Jim
Johnson, Publisher of State of Sunshine, a
political blog covering the state of Florida;
Eric Klinenberg, Associate Professor of
Sociology at New York University; Patrick
Manteiga, Editor and Publisher of La Gaceta;
Pat Roberts, President of the Florida
Association of Broadcasters; Art Robotham,
President of Hall Communications; and Steven
Wilson, Investigative Journalist.

Mr. Bradley.

MR. BRADLEY: Thank you very much for this opportunity, a unique opportunity to address the Commission and this community.

I'm Dan Bradley, Vice President of News for Media General's Broadcast Division. I work closely with our stations, helping them maintain high standards of journalism for the communities they serve with local news that is important, relevant and appropriately urgent.

While news director of WFLA, I was on the team that laid the foundation for what we call "Convergence," a melding of newspaper, TV and online resources to produce strong journalism and accelerating its delivery to the community.

Media General's news center in Tampa, Florida, is the most advanced converged laboratory in the nation and the only one in which a news staff of a TV station, a newspaper and an online operation are housed together under one roof.

Besides the strong presence in Tampa-St. Petersburg, Media General has similar convergence efforts underway in five other markets. While each platform has its own separate news staff that makes independent final decisions about content, this convergence laboratory features a multimedia desk, which is continuously staffed by editors from all three
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media and facilitates the rapid exchange of
story ideas, news content and video images
among the three outlets.

Newspaper reporters write TV -- write
scripts for TV newscasts that appear on air.
TV reporters write stories for the newspaper.
Photographers carry digital cameras and create
both still and video images for all three
platforms.

The newspaper's 112-year archive is
easily accessible by all journalists,
regardless of platform, a very unique resource
for any TV newsroom. These convergence efforts
are award-winning and benefit the communities
they serve.

Here are three benefit from this
converged approach to local news, as I see it.
First, convergence allows WFLA to serve
community needs better in times of crisis.

Without a doubt, convergence has brought more
eyes, ears and feet to the street, meaning
WFLA, the Tribune and TBO.com are that much
more likely to learn of a breaking news
development and rush that information to the
community.

Utilizing all of these assets, we've been
able to ensure the best and most comprehensive
coverage of local weather emergencies, such as
a hurricane or a tornado.

Second, convergence helps move the story
forward in the most informative and complete
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way. One of the breakthroughs that makes convergence possible is convincing our journalists that a story does not belong to them individually. No matter who gets the lead, who breaks the story, the news belongs to the community.

Because the Tribune has approximately six times the number of reporters, many work in specialized beats. WFLA through convergence gains access to expertise far beyond what TV stations' smaller news staff could cover alone. The combined outlets join forces to produce investigative reports and in-depth specials that tell stories in a multimedia format.

These joint stories have exposed corruption in public, private and nonprofit organizations. Through collaboration and publication on multiple platforms, these stories reach many more people and have a greater impact on improving life in the whole community.

Third, convergence helped make WFLA the political crossroads of the market. By utilizing the resources of the Tribune, WFLA has been able to provide much more detailed information on candidates and issues than it could've done alone.

The newsrooms share extensive polling data and coordinate coverage of issues and
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candidate profiles. The newspaper's lead political-beat reporter is a regular on-air contributor to the TV newscasts.

WFLA has a strong record of being a leader in local political coverage. It has an ambitious free air-time policy for statewide and federal candidates, aggressively stages and airs debates and tests with accuracy -- and tests for accuracy in political campaign advertising. WFLA does not participate or broadcast in any way the positions of the Tribune's editorial board.

Common ownership has been critical to Media General's success in meeting community needs. Since moving to the news center, more local TV news has been added, and full-time TV news staffing has not been reduced.

Results do not come easily. Without common values, vision and mission that joint ownership brings, these partnerships are doomed to failure. The media landscape is littered with failed attempts to create this partnership. And in every case the common theme is a lack of common ownership.

Media General is committed to the communities that it serves and being a leader in local news and information. Granting it the right to maximize news delivery in a converged manner will guarantee that residents of its communities will be among the most informed in all matters of civic discourse. Thank you very
MR. CAREY: I'm the vice president and general manager of WFTS, the ABC affiliate here in Tampa. And I also serve as the chairman-elect of the Florida Association of Broadcasters.

On behalf of both organizations, we welcome the Chairman, Commissioners and staff of the FCC to Tampa.

Since the primary topic is ownership, let me start by saying that FTS is one of ten television stations that make up the Scripps Television Group. Our corporate parent is the E.W. Scripps Company based in Cincinnati, Ohio.

We're a diverse and growing media enterprise with proud heritage of more than 125 years in newspapers and serving local communities. We have stayed viable, in part, by establishing our footprint in new mediums as technology and society evolve.

Our company has witnessed, adapted and endured the changes in the production and delivery of news and information; newspapers to radio, radio to television, television to cable, and now all of us establishing our brands in the online world; more choices, more audiences served and more competition.
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The laws -- the law of survival is in place. We're all fighting for a market share that is finite. The common thread throughout these changes is localism. Success is about being relevant and investing at the local level. And invest we do.

Millions of dollars are spent and are being spent on weather forecasting equipment, digital transmission conversion and news-gathering hardware. The current seismic change facing broadcasters -- and for the newspaper industry as well -- is the prevalence of broadband in the home.

Newspapers and television are more apt to look at Internet partnerships than partnering with each other. Remember the broadcast ownerships rules were adopted long before Google, Yahoo and You-Tube. Even the thought of a 500-channel universe seems dated now.

With the Internet, each person, each idea, can have its own channel and direct pathway to the public.

But when severe weather strikes, the electric power goes out, so does the cable TV and the computer in your home; it is the broadcasters, radio and television, that rise to the occasion and serve urgent news and information for free and over the air.

When that power fails, a battery-operated television will find our signal, and viewers can stay connected to what's going on. Like
other television stations in Tampa, we are in a
-- we work in an around-the-clock coverage mode
through four hurricanes between August and
September of 2004.

Two times those stations stayed on the
air for 48 hours, two other times for 60 hours.
Behind the scenes, our staff worked long
shifts, stayed at the stations, took a nap, and
then worked more hours.

Some suffered damage to their homes and
didn't get home to tend to their personal lives
for days, all because they take their craft and
their calling seriously.

Our sister station, also owned by
Scripps, WPTV, the NBC affiliate in West Palm
Beach, suffered severe damage to its roof
during Hurricane Francis in 2004. Rainwater
flooding in and threatened their master control
room.

As water rose on the floor, quick
decisions had to be made. But through cool
leadership and resourcefulness, the station
solved its crisis and stayed on the air.

That was important, as WPTV is the
most-watched, most relied-upon station in West
Palm Beach, and in a time of crisis, all the
more so. They went beyond their job
description. In fact, each station in Florida
has more than its share of stories over the
last few hurricane seasons.

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Tim Jones is a photographer at our station. During the height of one hurricane, he stepped on debris while training his live picture in on his reporter in the storm. A nail penetrated his workbook and pierced his foot.

He was live on the air, delivering pictures of the hurricane as it made landfall. For the next 20 minutes, he chose to stay still. But he kept his live picture on his reporter on the air. Twenty minutes went by before he moved his foot. Tim Jones is an exemplary employee dedicated to his craft. It is more than a job.

So long as our business keeps attracting people who look at it as a calling, it won't matter all that much who's running the place. But that level of service and dedication, beyond what an owner can ask of an employee, will not by itself be enough to compete effectively in the future.

Anyone with a computer can now compete to serve the local audience. And for me this point was brought home last year when I met an aspiring journalist. He had jump-started his career ambitions by building a local news website. He was the general manager, news director, anchor, reporter, writer and producer of the website.

When I met him last year he was still 15 years old. He would ride his bicycle --
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still too young to have a driver's license --
to the scene of local news stories and post
stories complete with pictures and video on his
website magnet (sic.)

And if you were to look at the website
you would think it belongs to a full-fledged

news organization. It's that impressive. He
sticks to local news; and for him, that's very
local, the blocks around his home. He's
surprisingly good and current with his
reporting. He serves his neighborhood well.

That's the future challenge to ownership
and to market share. And it's what we may look
like in the not-too-distant future. It's why
the debate about regulating broadcasters needs
to be framed in today's world. You can see the
evolution.

In the past a 15-year-old delivered the
news in the neighborhood by riding his bike
around and throwing a newspaper on your
doorstep. Today a 15-year-old is still in the
neighborhood, still riding a bicycle, but
publishes the news himself and delivers it to
your screen. Times change.

We welcome debate and public scrutiny.
We have much responsibility, and we do take it
seriously. We thank you for your hearing on
our stories in Tampa. And we'll be available
to work with you in the challenges we face in
the future. Thank you.
MR. SIGALOS: Mr. Carey.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Mr. Dardenne.

MR. DARDENNE: Thank you. I'm Robert Dardenne. I'm a former news reporter for both big media and cross-owned media, and now I'm an associate professor of journalism and media studies at USF-St. Petersburg and a director of Speak Up Tampa Bay, which manages public access television in Tampa Bay and Hillsborough County.

Our Tampa Bay media, already concentrated, experience similar market pressures we see everywhere. These rules will further concentrate this market and increase corporate profits. But will they benefit citizens?

Economy of scale, certainly in news content, shows little indication that it helps people who use news nearly as much as it does those who produce it. Merging media doesn't elevate content as much as it streamlines operation.

Efficiency is good economics and delivers news faster. But with current technology, the issues aren't always efficiency and speed as much as explanation, context, investigation, analysis and relevance.

Each medium has its strengths; immediacy of broadcast, intimacy of radio, images of...
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television, opinion and perspective of the web
and detailed context and analysis of
newspapers.

Convergence doesn't enhance these
strengths so much as blend them, creating a
more average media product, replacing three or
four distinctive ones often with fewer
reporters.

We already know what can happen to
content in a corporate media environment; fewer
investigative reports, less varied
international news, less context and depth,
more amusement and entertainment, increasing
dependence on authority, officials and
government and cheap and easy opinion, and less
local news, five minutes of broadcast -- by
your own study -- but still a lot of crime and
car wrecks.

News media critics long ago noted that
local news suffered after chains bought local
media. That hasn't changed. The best local
news media create and maintain community,
engage citizens through news and forums and
invigorates civic engagement.

And despite efforts of independent and
alternative media and a promising but basic
online journalism, most people still get most
of their news from mainstream news media.

(Applause.)

Competition makes local and other news
more vigorous. Diversity of ownership and perspective makes it more comprehensive and relevant to more people. Yet these rules encourage a monolithic and expanded corporate press that demonstrates preference for cheap and generic content over viable news and markets with further diminished competition. Corporate news media and individual journalists can and do produce excellent journalism. Knight-Ridder, now McClatchy, admirably uncovered the lead-up to the Iraq War. We would've had a healthier, more robust debate, if all mainstream media were as responsible.

Critics amply demonstrate that coverage of most other major media significantly promoted government viewpoints and restricted access to other perspectives. This powerfully illustrates the potentially disastrous weakness of a dominant media willing to sacrifice journalistic principles for economic gain, image and government favor.

No matter -- (Applause) -- no matter -- no matter what we are, pro-war, anti-war, liberal, conservative, Republican, Democrat, who among us can say we want this kind of news media?

Ideally, a press functions to help us be better citizens and thinkers. It exposes us to diverse perspectives. Then we form and occasionally act on opinions we temper or
fortify in discussion.

When FCC rules narrow the range of viewpoints, and we are overfed Anna Nicole Smith and starved for alternative perspectives on the war, how can we become better citizens?

(Applause.)

We are asked not to think, but to consume. News is not a typical commodity, to be sold like toothpaste. The constitutional protections afforded corporate and other news media come with significant obligations, mainly to provide relevant, credible news in a compelling enough manner to prosper and remain financially independent.

Prettying up packaging and buying the competition works for toothpaste, but it cannot work for news that serves citizens. Allowing corporations to control more media and own more local media is a bad idea.

Commissioners should be considering measures that lead to more competition and more voices, not ones guaranteeing to stifle both.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Dardenne.

We now go to Mr. Steve Erlanger.

MR. ERLANGER: Thank you. Tough act to follow here.

I would like to also thank you for the opportunity. My name's Steve Erlanger. I'm the publisher, C.O.O. and founder of Hometown
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We currently publish 18 separate local community newspapers along the east coast of Florida, covering approximately 250 miles north of Palm Beach north to Ormond Beach.

I would like to address the hazards of cross-ownership and most of it from a personal experience. I've been in the community newspaper business for about 26 years. I have lived in Ohio, Texas, California, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Florida.

I have seen the erosion of local news coverage by major media in all parts of the country. And this has been without the advent of cross-ownership in most cases. Cross-ownership will only further erode the local independent voice of the community.

Back when I was growing up in Springfield, Ohio, we had the Springfield Daily News. It came out every day, and it was filled with the daily Springfield news. Sometime ago it was purchased by Cox, who at this time owned the Dayton Daily News.

Today the Springfield Daily News is filled with national, world, state and, of course, Dayton news, but not much Springfield news. And this is common in every state in the country where major media companies come in and purchase the local daily.

It is no secret that it is far cheaper to
subscribe to the AP or UPI Wire Services or to the metro news and local edition than it is to hire local reporters to cover local, city or county news.

In every market the Hometown News is currently in, one of the reasons we have been so successful in a short period of time is because of the shortage of local news coverage by the major media. Most large media do not cover the local news anymore, at least not like they used to, and definitely not like what the public wants. (Applause.)

If the major media are allowed to own multiple sources, there will be less and less local news options available. Let me give you a few examples we have dealt with in what I see is one of the most damaging results of cross-ownership.

If one company is allowed to own several news advertising sources, their ability to eliminate the competition, someone like us, is great. If one company has a lock on a high percentage of the local residents, then their ability to control the advertising dollars by coercion and threats is magnified. And without advertising dollars, smaller independents, like Hometown News, will cease to exist.

I've heard people say, "Oh, they would never do that," or "They couldn't do something like that." And I'm here to tell you, it
happens, it happens every day. I'll give a few examples.

On the Treasure Coast, which is made up of St. Lucie, Martin and Indian River Counties, Scripps Howard is the major media company. They own four dailies. They also happen to own the broadcast media in Palm Beach.

For years they had one of the fastest-growing markets in the country locked up and had managed to keep out any and all potential competitors. That was until Hometown News came into being in 2002.

They were not happy. They distributed fliers with disparaging information on it about Hometown News. They sent personnel to talk to the advertisers who were running with us and telling them we were lying about this and that. And when that didn't work, they went one step further.

We were about to get a large advertiser doing a lot of business with us. It had been confirmed that they were trying to get an ad sent to us. When Scripps found out, they sent an upper-level manager to the account and, basically, threatened them, told them that if they were to run with us, then Scripps would have to go back and review their rate structure; in essence, told them that if they ran with us, they would raise their rates.

Of course, the business owner was upset. But what could he do. We have more examples of
Scripps making local businesses sign exclusive advertising contracts and then offer them an extra low rate.

And this is not the only example. We've had virtually the same scenario play out for Gannett in Brevard and Cox in Palm Beach and Volusia counties. Do not think for a minute that these are isolated cases.

The big media guys do not want competition. That is why they promote and desire cross-ownership. They are not happy making a few hundred million. They want it all; and they are willing to sacrifice the whole concept of unbiased news coverage, fair and equitable competition, to get it. And that's just the advertising side. (Applause.)

The biggest complaint I hear from citizens and business owners in the counties we serve is that the dailies have an agenda. They promote whatever side of an issue they're in agreement with. You can edit any discussion or video or sound track to say whatever you want it to say. You can interview select individuals to promote the same ideals as you.

Can you imagine how slanted this could become if you allowed one or two companies to control what is being fed to the public. And, believe me, this is what would happen.

Every one of these guys could afford to lose a little money or not make as much money
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long enough to put me and thousands of others
like me out of business. And once we are gone,
those great deals and rates on advertising
would be gone.

With no competition left, they could
charge whatever they wanted, and the business
owners would have to pay it. And if someone
came into the market, they could do it all over
again to drive them out.

And who do you think is covering the
local civic groups and nonprofits and other
charitable organizations?

It sure isn’t the major media. We have
literally changed the way -- (Applause) -- that
the nonprofits do business. We have become
their link to the community. We have never
accepted a dime from a charitable organization
for one of their fundraising events. This is
not always how it has been.

The dailies would stick it to them and
make them pay the highest rate on a car to rent
for their fundraisers. That doesn’t happen
anymore. Now the funds are used for whatever
worthy cause they care about. If we go, so
does that benefit.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much,
Mr. Erlanger. (Applause.)

Mr. Gordon.

MR. GORDON: Thank you. Thank you. Good
afternoon. My name is Ronald Gordon. I’m the
president of ZGS Communications, a
I'm also the president of the Independent Spanish Broadcasters Association, an organization created by Hispanic broadcasters to promote ownership and professional opportunities for Latinos and minorities in the media.

With a name like "Gordon," you might find it hard to believe, but I'm a native of Peru. I came to the United States at 15, when an American, my stepfather, married my mother. It was my ticket to America and my Green Card all rolled into one.

My partner and I started ZGS Communications with just $200 and through hard work and dedication built our company into what is the largest independent owner of Telemundo-affiliated stations.

We have 10 television stations, two full-power stations and eight Class A stations, including three in Florida; here in Tampa, Orlando and Fort Myers. We have almost 200 employees, 94 percent of them Hispanic or minority; and 92 percent of our senior management team is minority as well.

I am very proud of the contributions -- (Applause) -- Thank you. I'm very proud of the contributions ZGS has made and continues to make in support of minority broadcasting. As a

Hispanic company we take our responsibility
very seriously and view our FCC license, first
and foremost, as an opportunity to champion and
serve our community.

Our stations, our largest stations,
produce high-quality daily newscasts, air
between five to fifteen hours of local
programming per week, and a look at our recent
newsletter -- which I have here for the
commissioners -- shows you the kind of
commitment that we have and how we value the
opportunity to serve and make a difference in
our communities.

I'd like to think that we are a great
example of what having an FCC license is all
about. Despite the success and effort of
companies like ZGS, it is a tragedy that women,
small business and minorities have been
systematically disenfranchised from the public
airwaves.

As a result of -- (Applause) -- as a
result of poor public policy designed to
promote the economic interests of large media
conglomerates, community-based broadcasting,
localism and diversity of voice and ownership

have all been marginalized from our industry.

Minorities in the community represent
well over 30 percent of the population, yet
they account for less than 4 percent of radio
and less than 2 percent of TV ownership.

Despite the tremendous amount of lip
service, nothing has been done at the
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legislative or regulatory level to ensure that
ownership of our national airwaves is more
reflective of our society and its diversity.

Our concern at ZGS and at the Independent
Spanish Broadcasters is that we’re headed down
the same road with the television industry.
The proposals put forth today by the Commission
are essentially steps towards consolidation,
without a single component to promote diversity
of voice and competition for minority and small
business ownership in the television industry.

The ownership caps, which are already
distorted due to the UHF discount, will only
allow the very big to get even bigger. The
proposals for leased must-carry digital
streams, as well-intentioned as they might be,
will relegate minority programmers to a life of
tenant farmers working at the will and to the
benefit of their landlord broadcasters.

(Applause.)

All proposals to date will result in
fewer players, fewer voices and fewer
opportunities. It is incredible to think that
broadcasting has less minority and
small-business participation and equity than
almost any other industry.

At the end of the day, there has to be
some space, some opportunity for small and
minority business to participate and compete in
local broadcast companies.
Ironically, the most viable vehicle to promote localism, diversity and opportunity in television already exists; in fact, it is a licensed service of the FCC, and our company a wonderful example of its true potential, LPTV Class A television stations.

It is the only broadcast service required by law to provide local programming. It already has the most women and minority owners, and it almost -- it is almost entirely a local and community-based service.

Unfortunately, despite these attributes, the Congress and the Commission have never fully embraced or supported this service; consequently, it has struggled to reach its potential, due in large part to the fact that Class A stations have no must-carry rights in a television world increasingly and overwhelmingly dominated by cable and satellite subscription services.

I am hopeful that as the Commission reviews its television ownership rules, it will explore and embrace LPTV Class A service as a unique platform to effectively increase localism, diversity of voice and minority and female ownership in the television industry.

The conditions for this support already exist; a local-content requirement, a limited number of stations for market, a licensed service designed for small business and compliance with all existing television
Finally, to allow this service to survive and effectively compete, Congress and the FCC should require cable and satellite services to carry Class A primary signal on the local broadcast digital tier, a condition easily filled in a digital world.

I trust the Commission will use the proposed ruling-making as an opportunity to address the inequities that exist with our public airwaves; no lip service, but real meaningful policies and regulations that create a level playing field for all sectors of our society to participate and compete in our industry. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Gordon.

MR. JOHNSON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to address you here today.

I believe the Internet represents the future of the media. More and more people are getting their news online, and surveys have shown that the number of sources for the news is growing.

Online advertising is growing faster than any other medium. And it's growing by almost the same proportion as print advertising is declining.

According to the Project for Excellence
in Journalism, eight percent of Americans -- of online Americans -- have written some form of a blog. While 51 million Americans subscribe to newspapers, 57 million Americans have read or do read blogs. That's 39 percent of all online adults.

The numbers show the trend continuing to grow and online alternatives gaining wider and wider acceptance; however, there's one very important note to consider.

Online news sites generating the most traffic are those owned by large media corporations which have the power and finances to publish a significant amount of content.

My own site, which narrowly focuses on Florida politics sees the number of visitors in one week that TBO.com gets in less than one hour. At the same time, I personally post, in one week, the same number of stories TBO.com posts in less than one hour.

Content drives traffic. And large media corporations have more content. The best hope that citizen journalists have to compete with large media corporations is hyper-local news sites. These websites offer news more localized than even a local newspaper could ever offer; moreover, some might even argue the newsworthiness of such hyper-local news, so large media corporations simply don't devote resources to it.
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This provides an opportunity for communities to produce local news that did not exist even five years.

So where are we today?

As you have heard and will hear from others, changing the rules on media ownership will have a negative impact on local news coverage. The larger media corporations can grow, the less local news will be generated. At the same time, not changing the local -- the rules on media ownership will have a negative impact on local news coverage.

Newspapers, and to some extent, television and radio are seeing a declining audience resulting in declining advertising dollars. It's a downward spiral that will never be reversed.

One of these effects is the -- in the -- of the audience shift and local -- is a reduction in local news, which is already being seen as the newsrooms across the country downsize.

Now, if you can't change the rules because local coverage will suffer, and you have to change the rules because local coverage is starting to suffer, what do you do?

I think you have to find a middle ground. If you change the rules, then put a greater impetus on large media corporations to serve the public interests.
If you allow broadcast companies to buy newspapers, require that they provide more resources for local and hyper-local news.

If you allow companies to buy more radio stations and televisions (sic) within a market, require a minimum of HD and digital programming on those news stations to be locally produced and locally oriented.

Finally, make it easier for low-powered community radio and/or television stations to operate. If media companies who still produce the bulk of online content are not strictly required to provide local news, then the amount of local news online will decrease.

Simply pointing to the Internet as proof of competition will not be enough in the foreseeable future. There are not enough local content providers, and the audience is not yet comfortable finding those that do exist.

In the end, while I recognize some action may be taken, I strongly urge you to temper any action you take with the recognition of the need for greater oversight on those companies who move beyond the current limits. It is still better to do nothing than to change the rules without oversight. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Johnson.

Mr. Klinenberg.

MR. KLINENBERG: Thank you.

I'm an associate professor at New York University. And I spent the past five years...
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studying how FCC rule changes allowing more concentration have affected diversity and competition and localism in our nation's media system.

And that said, I wish the Commission would solicit, formally, research from all social scientists and not just the economists. Because there's a lot that they can't tell you.

My testimony today will focus on the issue of cross-ownership -- (Applause.) I didn't know that many people didn't like economists. (Laughter & Applause.)

The FCC originally passed the ban in 1975 to ensure that citizens have access to a wide range of viewpoints on local issues and to prevent any single media company from having an undue influence deciding which perspectives and positions get an airing and which do not.

Your predecessors believed that diversity in ownership promotes competition, that it creates opportunities for small independent media companies, including those owned by women and people of color, that it provides outlets for minority perspectives in creative programming, and that it promotes local content that's not only vital to democracy but also makes our hometown feel like home.

In 1975 broadcast television stations and newspapers were the two most popular sources of local news. And today, despite all the new
media we have, they still are.

The companies calling for repeal make two core complaints. The first is that they say the ban is no longer necessary because new media provides consumers with diverse perspectives. And "Second," they say,

"Newspaper companies today need profits, They're losing money," they say, "They need profits so that their television stations can subsidize journalistic operations."

Yet, overall, nationally speaking, the record gives us real reason to pause and be skeptical.

Consider the Tribune Company in my hometown, Chicago. Before the U.S. Senate Commerce Committee, Tribune's former president of publishing assured officials that with new media offerings, there is no risk of one voice dominating the marketplace with ideas.

But that's hard to square with what Tribune's current president and CEO recently told investors in a shareholder meeting. Before them he said, "In Chicago, Tribune's newspapers, television stations, websites, magazines and radio stations reach 6.4 million people." That's 90 percent of the market.

So let me ask you. Which of Tribune's two stories are we as citizens, or you as commissioners, to believe?

And if the Tribune CEO is being honest with his shareholders, is this not exactly the
kind of market domination that is dangerous for democracy, the very condition that the cross-ownership ban is designed to prevent?

(Applause.)

Today some newspaper companies say that cross-ownership will serve the public interests by promoting more and better local journalism.

But, again, consider Tribune. In LA, where it owns the LA Times and KTLA TV, Tribune has limited -- eliminated about one-quarter of the newspaper editorial staff. That's about 300 people -- inaudible comments from the audience) -- since establishing its cross-ownership arrangement (Applause.)

In New York, where I live, Tribune owns Newsday and CW11. It's cut about one-third of the Newsday editorial staff in the past three years. And the story is similar in Chicago and in Hartford.

I know none of this will surprise you here in Tampa. Media General recently announced plans to eliminate 70 staffers, while also focusing on hyper-local contents. And doing hyper-local content sounds great, but it also begs the question: How can a news organization cut 70 people and then do more local journalism? (Applause.)

In my research, I've also learned that
cross-ownership exacts other more insidious toll, on newspaper reporting in particular.
When media companies converge operations, managers urge or even require staffers to spend less time reporting and more time on television.

And in Tampa and in Chicago I met journalists who said that doing TV spots means writing short scripts, putting on makeup, taping, editing, taking off the makeup. And that can take up to a quarter of one’s day, costing time they need to produce quality news.

I heard related concerns with cross-ownership. Journalists can be rewarded or even retained for being telegenic. With cross-ownership plum assignments can go to multitaskers, not necessarily to the best reporters.

With cross-ownership, citizens are exposed to fewer perspectives than when TV stations and newspapers are separately owned.

So now we have to ask: Who is going to benefit from cross-ownership?

From my view, it’s not journalists, it’s not citizens, it’s not cities, it’s not communities; it’s just a few corporations which will become even more profitable than they already are. (Applause.)

I’m going to ask for a few seconds just because of the -- the blocks (sic) here. I want to emphasize that I mean more profitable.
We all know that newspapers stock values are sagging. We all know that circulation is lagging. There's no question that newspaper managers are under great pressure to deal with those problems.

But we need to acknowledge that typical newspaper chains are getting profit margins around 20 percent. That's three times the norm in the Fortune 500 companies. The problem they're facing comes from investment bankers and organized its shareholders, who aren't satisfied with that, not with --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Mr. Manteiga.

MR. MANTEIGA: Thank you for the opportunity to speak before this commission.

My name's Patrick Manteiga. I'm the publisher of La Gaceta. I represent an endangered species -- (Applause) -- in our modern age of communications, the family-owned small newspaper.

La Gaceta was founded by my grandfather Vitoriano Manteiga, in 1922, here in Tampa. And we continue to publish today in three languages, Spanish, English and Italian. Our goal is to inform, promote and serve the Latin community.

I feel there's a real danger in allowing cross-ownership of a major daily newspaper and...
television stations in the same market and
unrestricted ownership of radio and television
stations.

I have witnessed that these and similar
relationships are used to silence competition
with business practices that are unfair and, in
the end, detrimental to the market they serve.
The Tribune, under Media General's
ownership, closed its afternoon daily in the
eyear '80s after it became apparent that the
market forces -- that market forces made it
more than difficult for anyone to start up an
afternoon daily. This action removed one voice
from our community.

A decade later, Media General bought up a
group of local weeklies called "Sun-Belt
Publishing." When they were first purchased,
Media General and the Tampa Tribune promised
the public that these weeklies would remain
independent from the Tribune.

But over the years the major dailies
slowing incorporated these weeklies into
becoming a section of the Tampa Tribune. These
weeklies carry the Tribune logo on the front
page and are inserted in the Tribune.

They no longer have an independent
editorial voice focussed on the local
communities they serve. Plant City, Sun City,
Brandon and other communities have lost their
voice.

The Tribune is now using its size in
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relationship with its television station to gain an unfair advantage in niche markets. My newspaper now faces competition from Centro, a Spanish-language publication started by the Tribune a year ago.

I would welcome competition from other Spanish newspapers; in fact, there’ve been several independent startups over the past few years. Head-to-head competition can make us try harder, work smarter, and in the end make a better product.

But in this case I am not competing against Centro. I am competing against Media General, the Tampa Tribune, WFLA-TV and TBO.com. Centro ads are being inserted by the -- sold by the Tribune, and in many cases are part of the package that basically gives away advertising in Centro if a client buys ads in the Tribune or its affiliates.

Competing against an opponent who has unlimited resources, and in this case is willing to take a -- take a loss here, is from our perspective, unfair.

This kind of competition is meant to put us and all of other independent Spanish newspapers out of business by cutting off our revenue and separating us from our community. One of the tactics is to offer nonprofit events support from Media General’s TV and
newspaper, if the event gives exclusivity to Centro. You can see this is almost impossible to compete against.

What makes the situation worse is that Centro does not offer an independent political editorial. While the Tribune works to silence us, they do not want to use their newspaper as a voice for the Hispanic community. Centro does not endorse candidates, does not fight for fairness, takes positions, contrary to the Tribune.

The Latin community needs nurturing and help. It needs an advocate. The Tribune only wants our money. They are not just silencing us; they're silencing the Latin community.

The same thing is happening at Spanish radio. CBS has opened a Spanish FM station that is hurting locally-owned AM stations. It's using its many English stations here to market and sell its Spanish one.

The local AM so far has done an admirable job of community programming. CBS has not matched their involvement and probably never will. It's just money to corporations like Media General and CBS.

When CBS started La Nueva in this market, for the first few days no one at the all-Spanish stations spoke Spanish. It's kind'a hard to serve the community when you can't understand what they're saying.

(Applause.)
The FCC wants our airwaves --

(Applause) -- the FCC wants our airwaves to be used responsibly. And I'm sure, while you don't regulate print, you hope for the same for that media. Local ownership is really the only way to guarantee responsibility.

When it's your family's name on the door, you act responsibly. When you meet those you serve at school and at church, at the grocery store, you act responsibly.

The problem with letting the media get bigger than it is now, is that ownership is further removed from the community, so they care less, they are harder to reach, and in the end community advocacy, responsible journalism and commitment to diversity comes secondary to making a buck.

For years we fought for the Latin community, because the Tribune wouldn't. Now that our numbers are greater, they want a piece of the pie, but they won't share the responsibility.

Please don't make my job any tougher than it is. Cap the size of big media before they use their size to extinguish the minority voice. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Manteiga.

Mr. Roberts.

MR. ROBERTS: Good afternoon,

Mr. Chairman and Commissioners of the Federal
I am Pat Roberts, President of the
Florida Association of Broadcasters and
Chairman of the FCC State Emergency
Communication Committee.

Over the past couple of years I've served
on the FCC's Media Security and Reliability
Counsel, both the first and the second. I have
spoken before the U.S. Senate on hurricane
preparedness and your FCC Katrina panel and
currently serve on your FCC Warning Act Panel.

I co-chaired the National EAS, an
Emergency Communications Summit, for the
country. And since Hurricane Andrew, in 1992,

Florida has spent time and invested in a
state-wide EAS system that is also utilized by
Amber Alerts.

Today we are the model for the country.
Unfortunately, most states still rely on a
local daisy-chain system, not state-wide
operation. Florida has also partnered with FAB
and local stations in a major public education
campaign to prepare the state for hurricanes.

Mr. Chairman and Commissioners, I want to
personally thank each of you and the staff of
the FCC for the help you've provided the
broadcasters in our state and states across the
Gulf Coast during the recent hurricanes.

Your staff was there seven days a week,
including weekends, to check the condition of
the local and TV radio stations and to offer
your assistance. Of all the federal agencies and departments, you were the shining light during a very difficult time.

I know this personally, 'cause I've been at the Florida EOC during every landfall of every hurricane since Andrew and at the cities of the impact within 24 hours. This includes Hurricane Katrina, where I arrived on the Mississippi coast the next day with other Florida First Responders.

When the path of hurricane start toward Florida or other states, the TV and radio stations go full-time with news to warn their communities. After landfall, usually, large areas are without electric power. Radio truly becomes the lifeline to their community.

In our state, radio and TV stations have already established partnerships to reach the people. TV usually has more resources for news, weather and emergency information. So in those cases, the local TV signals and audio track are carried on multiple local radio stations to reach the residents in the impacted area.

We know that these partnerships have saved lives during the time around landfall and immediately following hurricanes. And they have been the only communication to the people for several days thereafter.

In 2004 we did use EAS when Hurricane
Charley made a sharp right-hand turn. It's the first time we'd ever used the EAS during a hurricane, because we always thought we knew they were coming.

When Max Mayfield called and asked our governor to immediately alert all the residents of Ft. Myers and Punta Gorda that their area was going to be hit, the EAS message was sent out within minutes in both English and Spanish, and all the local stations carried it.

This change of course with Hurricane Charley would not have been known by most of the residents if they had not had an effective and reliable EAS system in that area.

Today you are with us in our largest media market, Tampa-St. Petersburg. It's a diverse market with a substantial senior-citizen population, a strong historic Hispanic community, a viable and respected Black community and a strong business community on both sides of the Bay.

The owners of broadcast stations in this market and across Florida have found the programming and formats that work for them. But more importantly, they meet the needs of these diverse groups.

Let me say, as president of the Florida Broadcasters, I am most proud of the efforts broadcasters have taken on to serve their community, not only with Hurricane Preparedness.
but also Amber Alerts, support of local charities, education on such things as drug abuse, spouse and child abuse, underage drinking, helping groups like the American Heart Association American Cancer, homeless campaigns and helping our National Guard in Florida recruit people to join, as well as many other worthwhile projects.

The current ownership rules, as they are represented in Florida, have worked well for our citizens in the broadcast community. The cross-ownership of the Tampa Tribune and WFLA has not created an unfair advantage for them. You only have to look at the strong and viable competitors, such as the St. Pete Times, the other local TV and radio stations and many smaller daily, weekly papers and the multiple Internet sites that are serving Tampa Bay.

Florida has also seen the importance of TV duopoly in serving the community. Today with the multiple sources of news, information and entertainment, TV duopolies often allow the combined operation the opportunity to utilize their resources to serve their communities in a more viable and economical way.

I believe the current radio ownership rules have worked well for the local communities. Because they have allowed broadcasters to become economically stronger and to better serve their community.
In closing, today broadcasters face growing competition from cable, Internet, newspapers, satellite TV, satellite radio, cell phones and even iPods. The digital waves will only increase competition and sources of information to the public.

No other industry serves their community as well as TV and radio. They raise funds for worthy causes. They are the backbone of the EAS and Amber, and they are the primary source of information for residents on news, weather, and most important, they are the lifeline during disasters.

Mr. Sigalos: Thank you, Mr. Roberts.

(Applause.)

Mr. Roberts: Broadcasters take their responsibilities seriously. Thank you.

Mr. Sigalos: Thank you very much.

Mr. Rowbotham.

Mr. Rowbotham: Good afternoon. I'm Art Rowbotham, President of Hall Communications and General Manager of WONN, WPCV, WLKF and WWRZ in -- Radio in Lakeland Florida. I've been the manager there for 24 years.

Lakeland's a town of about 90,000 people located in the Tampa Bay PMA, just east of Tampa. Thirty-seven radio stations are listed in the latest Arbitron Ratings for the Lakeland-Winter Haven Metro Survey Area.

Hall Communications was founded in 1964 by the late Robert M. Hall, based in Lakeland.
now, and it also operates in four other markets in the northeastern United States.

My wife, partner and principle owner of Hall Communications, Bonnie Hall Rowbotham, who is in the audience today, is carrying on the traditions of localism and community service of her father. She joins in these comments. And we thank the Commission for allowing us to share our thoughts with you.

Our stations are committed to localism and serving our communities. All program decisions are made locally. We donate tens of thousands of dollars of free airtime yearly to charities and nonprofits. 97 Country WPCV, through its radiothons, has raised a total of $869,000 over the last four years for St. Jude's Children's Research Hospital.

We cosponsored fundraising drives and events for thousands of promotional announcements for charities, such as Citrus Center Boys Clubs, American Cancer Society, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, and many more.

We donate thousands of dollars more of free airtime annually to nonprofits, such as the Imperial Symphony Orchestra, the Polk Theatre and the Pied Piper Theatre.

On top of all that, a total of about 25,000 minutes of locally-produced public service announcements and programming are aired on -- each year on our stations.
We maintain a news and public affairs staff. Our capable staff performed extraordinarily well when confronted by Hurricanes Charley, Frances and Jeanne in 2004. During that weather emergency we maintained local coverage simulcasts on all four of our stations.

We worked in partnership with Channel 8 WFLA, to give our listeners the best news and weather resources when our stations were literally the only lifeline of communication to our communities.

We coordinated our efforts with the local emergency operations center, where one of our news team was based. We worked with the Florida Association of Broadcasters and the Red Cross.

Some of our stations were without power for three weeks. But we stayed on the air, thanks to having generators and backup transmitters at all four of our tower sites. One of our towers was surrounded by floodwaters. An employee donated his fishing boat so we could reach the tower to stay on the air.

Our staff worked incredible hours, lived at the stations, and after the storms passed, they helped raise hurricane relief supplies of food, blankets and other goods that were desperately needed by the community.

These efforts to support our community
are all examples of local free radio. What is the secret of good local radio?

That secret is something we rarely discuss. It's the elephant in the room that we ignore. Good local radio requires people. Local promotions, local news and local public affairs require local personnel.

(Applause.)

They must be talented, productive -- (Applause) -- committed radio people. We have plenty of those kind of people at Hall Communications. But there's a catch. The secret is that effective localism requires a substantial financial investment.

Hall personnel are fairly compensated, have great health and dental benefits, generous retirement plans, substantial life insurance and many other benefits. None of this would be possible without consolidation of ownership.

By owning multiple stations in small markets, we can spread the cost of localism over several stations.

We ask the Commission to evaluate the impact on small markets of regulatory changes before they are made, so that small family companies, like Hall, can continue to properly serve their local communities.

Again, we thank the members of the Commission for allowing us to present our
thoughts. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Rowbotham.

Mr. Wilson.

MR. WILSON: Commissioners, I thank you for the opportunity to address you today on this important issue. And I speak only for myself, as a broadcast journalist for more than 35 years. Yet I can assure you that there are countless other reporters who hold some of the same views.

As you review the advisability of further lifting the restrictions on media ownership, I ask that you consider how the purpose of a giant corporation can be directly at odds with an organization that is mandated to first serve the public interests.

What if they expected our priest, reverend or rabbi to increase the headcount at every service by any means necessary and to make sure that what's in the collection plate each week is more than the week before?

Trying to meet the demands of Wall Street and the shareholders, who see no difference between making refrigerators and using the public airwaves to truly serve a community, is largely responsible for leaving journalism, and especially television journalism, in the state it is today.

As big media have been allowed to get even larger, they've demanded more consistency and central control. Now, when you're making
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10 lightbulbs in Dayton, the principles are pretty
11 much the same as when you produce them at the
12 factory in Denver or Dallas.

13 But when you're serving a community,
14 Dayton is not Denver or Dallas. Yet, this is
15 how many big media organizations are operating
16 now. And the bigger they are, the more they
17 grow, the more they tend to lose their focus on
18 local public service and do whatever enhances
19 profit margins on return in investment.

20 Now, certainly, there's nothing wrong
21 with profit. And good journalism requires good
22 business. But from the inside, I've seen how
23 too often it runs counter to the public
24 interests.

25 I've spent the last six years working in

90

Detroit, one of America's biggest and in many
ways most-troubled cities. CBS owns and
operates two of its 39 television stations
there. Its marketing motto: "CBS Detroit,
where no news is good news. Watch the
Hollywood Insider at 6:00 and Everybody Loves
Raymond at 11:00."

(Laughter & Applause.)

Can you best serve a troubled community
with no news broadcast on either station? Not
the Bill Bailey, Ed Morrow, Walter Cronkite CBS
where I once worked.

The number of different broadcasts voices
in a community also affects the diversity of
coverage that viewers get, and media concentration has led to a far more homogenized approach to the news. Greater ownership and more centralized control is not always in the public interest.

Here in Tampa, at one of this market's leading stations, decisions about which issues to cover has been second-guessed and controlled by the parent company 800 miles away. And I'm not talking just about some corporate news executive who directs decisions at some two-dozen stations this group owns in several states, I'm talking about the corporate marketing men deciding what viewers will and will not see.

Now, why is this a problem? Because the station's local management and its journalists who live and work right here in Tampa -- the people best able to judge what's in the best interests of serving their own community -- those people are told that their news judgments must meet a different criteria more than important than what they know to be important here.

And what's more important to the big broadcaster? Choosing to report only what are good marketing opportunities to promote the television station's brand.

So when the Tampa news director sends into the corporate headquarters the required list of issues he intends to cover -- usually
During the ratings period -- the company marketing men can overrule the local journalist's judgment and summarily kill any story.

"Not that it was a bad story," wrote the marketing chief in this internal memo, "just a story that wouldn't be broad enough to draw in a large amount of viewers in one that demonstrates your brand."

"Don't take offense," nearly two dozen news directors were told, "We're just trying to get the best stories for your station to market."

So at this station group, and others like it, who do you suppose is trying to get the best stories to serve the community, especially for those important issues that lack the flash and opportunity for self-promotion?

Bigger is not better.

And at this same Tampa television station and at other stations -- I assure you, I'm not picking on just this one -- pressure from corporate offices to increase profits have led to news directors being judged no longer primarily on the quality of the stations journalism, now we are scored 25 out of 100 points for overall delivery of brand ambassadorship and defining moments and supporting the brand within reporter packages, 15 points for presenting the anchorman's
perspective, showing him or her as the radio station's brand ambassador at least once in every newscast.

They give bonus points for well-showcasing the station's talent, and they take away points whenever there's a significant missed opportunity to showcase the station's brand.

Now, nowhere on this score sheet that I obtained do news managers in this whole outfit get any points anymore for selecting relevant and important subjects, for journalistic enterprise or for good judgment. And nothing rewards accuracy and fairness.

At too many stations, now, we don't succeed anymore by being good journalists serving the viewer. We're brand ambassadors to help sell an image -- (Applause) -- largely unrelated to substance and the quality of our reporting. (Applause.)

Yes, journalists and their managers could take a stronger stand inside their own companies, but it doesn't -- seldom happens, because speaking up sometimes leaves you out.

And in closing, might I urge you and your staffs to seriously investigate these matters. If you're going to allow fewer and fewer to control more and more, please, honor your own obligation and duty to assure that these licensees are of sufficient character to
control the airwaves.

When you're presented with evidence that a journalist was pressured to deliberately present false, distorted or slanted news and fired when they threatened to tell you about it -- as happened in my own case -- should it take years just for you to acknowledge that you're taking it seriously?

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, sir.

MR. WILSON: Commissioners, bigger is not better, not better for public service or journalism. Thank very much. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much, Mr. Wilson.

As we now transition to the public-comment period, I need to first recognize the following three individuals who were asked to speak for two minutes, at this point in the program, in order to keep the panel to a more manageable size.

At this point could Congressman Jim Davis please come to the microphone. (Applause.)

CONGRESSMAN DAVIS: Commissioners, thank you for being here. Thanks for the chance to speak. I am not a congressman. I am a former congressman, and I'm here to speak as a citizen.

I spent eight years as a state official here, ten years as a congressman. I'm now practicing law with a law firm that does legal
work for broadcasters, including Media General.

But I’m here today to express my own views and the same views I expressed in Congress. I oppose much of the relaxation of ownership limits that this commission proposed while I was in Congress and actively fought for those personally and successfully as a number of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

As you have seen here in this room tonight -- I'm sure you've seen this all over the country -- there's a lot of people here because they don't think their voice is being heard.

There are a lot of people here who feel let down, because they do not think we have had an open-and-honest debate in this country about the Iraq War and many other major issues.

(Applause.)

You have heard of certain ideas about how to give more individuals the right to be heard. I am here tonight to tell you that I think that the cross-ownership here in this community has had some benefits.

I would strongly urge you to survey the many listeners and readers who will not have time to be here tonight. And I know you will listen to all the speakers.

But in my experience, since the conversion, I feel there has been more hard news, less entertainment -- not enough hard news for my taste, but still more -- in both
quantity and quality in the news network that has experienced the conversion. I urge you to survey the viewers to find out for yourself.

Secondly, one of the things I think we can all agree upon here tonight is less people are reading the newspaper. I believe that you should consider the benefits in competitive markets like this, particularly, where we enjoy the benefit of the competition of ideas from dueling dailies to allow a newspaper to survive by combining it with a television station.

I think that is important to preserve the future of the newspaper industry. Because many of the issues we will be debating -- not just the issues you'll be debating -- do not fit into 30 seconds, do not even fit into a two-minute news broadcasts.

We want to preserve the written word and the creation of ideas that comes from competing newspapers and competing television and radio stations in communities like this. Thank you for the chance to be heard. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Monsignor Higgins.

MONSIGNOR HIGGINS: Well, I am not any great expert on any of these things. But I'd just like to say that I agree completely with, large just doesn't mean best.

I'd like things, basically, as far as possible to come from the bottom. I always
remember the wisdom of one of the old people, when I was young, telling me this, that most of the big decisions in the church came from the bottom. But, of course, many times they were not listened to.

But then I'd like to think that the local news, for example, is best handled by local people. They are the ones, for example, that know what's going on and that would know what's best for their community.

The bigger we get, the farther away we get from the center, and when we get away, the less we're going to get of our own local news. And it's very difficult, I know, in this day and age.

And I'm very concerned about the small person, the mom-and-pop stores disappearing. I'm very concerned, for example, that the little shops have disappeared, too, and that the richer become richer, and the poorer become poorer and that, basically, we have no mom-and-pops (sic) at all.

It concerns me greatly. Because I want people to want ownership, even though it may be a small thing. When you're talking to -- you've dealt with -- (inaudible) -- in some way and in dealing with your -- the newspapers, the local newspapers, all I can say is that I know that it's a very difficult question, but I would ad to the members here that we have got
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to, first of all, try and get our people back
to reading again, because very few of them are.
    That starts with our schools. We have to
strive for them to even start reading the
newspapers. Because they don't read, and if
you don't read, well, that's that part taken
care of.

    And the second part that we have to try
and do is that we put in the news, for example,
was it newsworthy or news -- for example, the
local news, that is -- the facts each and every
one of us -- the news as best we can -- that's
subjective.

    And I know that it's a difficult one.
But I know that you'll try and do your best,
because democracy depends on the news in many
ways. Because we depend on you -- time to get
out to the public the different views, so that
we can make up our minds and tell you what to
do. (Applause.)

    MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.
MONSIGNOR HIGGINS: Thank very much.
MR. SIGALOS: Mark Lunsford.
(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Mark Lunsford.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: All right. Now it's time
for the public-comment period of our program.
Before I review the ground rules, if you would
please -- I'd like to call out the first
names -- go to the nearest aisle microphone.

Greg Vawter, John Scott Duffy, Eric Land, Mark Adams and John Russell.
I would like to thank our panels very much for their participation. (Applause.)

All right. Just go to the nearest-aisle microphone. Okay. Here are the ground rules. Everybody sees the time clock. We have a two-minute time limit. We're going to follow that quite strictly.

We have many, many people who've signed up. Occasionally, I'll go over the number. Some of you may recall the number where you signed up, what order you were in. I'll go over that from time to time. Again, we have a two-microphones setup. This isn't --

A VOICE: Is there a break?
MR. SIGALOS: There is a break scheduled at 7:30. So, as much as we come towards that time period, you know, just so you have an idea that -- whether you might be speaking before or after the break, just wanted to give you a sense of that.

And we have -- our speakers just have one mike. You can -- just remember, I just want to bring you to the closest microphone. We'll go in order -- most obviously, the closest microphone.

A VOICE: -- call me by number?
MR. SIGALOS: Oh, from time to time, I'll call out the number. Right now I'm just going
down names.

Greg Vawter. (Applause.)

MR. VAWTER: Thank you.

Commissioners, my name is Greg Vawter.

I'm a career public service television manager (sic.) Through my work I've taught many organizations and individuals to use media to express themselves. I have also organized productions for local schools and governments and nonprofits.

And during my time here, I'll refer to two ideas, commodities for sale and economies of scale. Commodities for sale allow broadcasting to be profitable.

As you know, commercial stations advertise. But the products they tout are not the commodities of broadcasters, rather viewers and listeners are the commodities.

The public's eyes and ears are sold to advertisers. And while that fact is often disturbing for citizens to hear, it's nothing new.

But now the economies of scale are driving large media conglomerates to gobble up as many broadcasting outlets as the Commission will allow. Consolidated companies operate at less cost per unit than smaller outfits, resulting in far greater profits for shareholders.

But that's not so great for us citizens.
We need differing perspectives on our TVs and radios and in our newspapers so we can make more informed decisions in our democracy. We give the programmers their frequencies at no charge, so we and you as our representatives must not put their desire for profit above our need for diversity. Please decide against allowing media companies to consolidate their business interests at the expense of America's choices among differing voices. Instead of letting a few conglomerates buy even more local media choices, give us more options in the voices to which we can -- (Inaudible.) Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

John Scott Duffey.

MR. DUFFY: My name is John Duffey. I was a broadcast news producer for 25 years until disabled by a heart attack. I've spoken at FDA, FCC and other hearings only asking the government to put human interests ahead of corporate interests. And I feel like I'm largely ignored.

So, no more Mr. Nice Guy. Today I will demand: Quit relaxing broadcast news broadcast ownership rules. Roll them back and require more local control of our airwaves. Two weeks ago tornadoes ripped across Tampa Bay. Clear Channel, the company owning a lot of radio stations in this town, broadcast a warning during its -- 9:00 a.m.
Even though Clear Channel promotes this station as the news leader, it failed to keep listeners updated for 25 minutes, the critical time this storm front passed through our community.

They were fusing up the Sunday morning policy programming and a constant stream of commercials, because they failed to provide adequate staff for coverage, even though this storm had already killed many people on the other side of the Gulf of Mexico, and anyone with half a brain knew a day earlier that we were going to get hit.

When I complained to the Clear Channel local boss, he said they planned to install robotic devices. They had a similar system online five years ago in Minot, North Dakota, where they’ve got a lot of radio stations.

They cut labor costs.

They failed to alert people that a train loaded with toxic chemicals derailed in the middle of the night. The disaster killed one person and injured many more. To this day, Clear Channel still blames local law enforcement for their failure.
putting profits above public health and safety and you put lives at risk. Please stop that now. You must require at least half of all broadcast licenses in every market to go to local interests, local control. Doing otherwise violates the public trust you've vowed to us. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you. Eric Land.

MR. LAND: Good evening. I'm Eric Land, the chief operating officer of the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

In my role I see firsthand how the combined operations of Media General, WFLA-TV, the Tampa Tribune and TBO.com are working together delivering more news to the area than they could have done alone.

If a Tampa Tribune reporter gets just a sports figure, she is just as likely to break the story on the air or online in the newspaper. And when that happens, I routinely see an in-depth follow-up the next day in the Tampa Tribune. Journalists take the position the story belongs to the public, not to a particular outlet.

I live in Tampa and care deeply about local government. Media General's properties have given a little more political coverage and hard-hitting investigative pieces than could ever be produced alone.

Tampa residents have come to rely on
these three outlets, not only for analysis in truth in candidate statements and advertising, but as hosts for broadcast of debates of key races (sic.)

Before my year and a half in the NFL, I enjoyed a 32-year career in the TV industry, first as a TV reporter, ending as president/general manager at WFLA-TV, the Media General TV station here in Tampa.

I helped launch the new center. I have deep roots in the industry. My dad retired from a 56-year career overseeing newspaper, TV and radio cross-ownership operations in Gainesville, Ohio.

Media General and its local competitors have continued to be the voice for the voiceless and hold powerful accountable. In an age of relentless media competition, I've never seen efficiency be a replacement for integrity.

Media General and other newspaper companies put news first and foremost. Never in my 32 years with them did I ever witness a case where corporate headquarters dictated an editorial addendum, reporting or content.

Elimination of network compensation, indeed TV conversion expense and competition from unregulated media put incredible financial pressure to bear on TV stations and news operations. Don't handicap the very
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institutions who bring free speech to a free society.

Permitting companies who have owned heritage and deep commitment to own, jointly operate newspapers and stations in the same community in the best interests of the FCC --

guarantee the future for local news in communities of all sizes (sic.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. LAND: Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Mark Adams.

MR. ADAMS: My name is Mark Adams. The

FCC is required to act in the public interest, not in the interest of big business. A free flow of information -- (Applause) -- is necessary for our democracy to function.

This is why our founders protected freedom of speech and the press. They understood that the public needs to know what our government is doing. They knew only an informed public can make sure that we were protected from tyranny.

Yet the FCC is considering action that would allow for more media consolidation which, according to its own study, results in six-minutes less news per half-hour newscast. That's one-third less news coverage.

Already most people feel that our news media does a poor job covering our government. They realize -- (Applause) -- that the media does not cover issues thoroughly. And many
know the media will cover up serious problems which the public should know about.

For example, I represent candidates challenging the official results of the 2006 elections for four members of Congress and Florida’s Governor. We had evidence showing that the official results took votes from Democratic and Independent candidates and gave them to Republicans. But there has been little coverage of this serious issue, even though there is abundant evidence that the official results produced by the secret vote-counting computers have not been accurate in the last few elections throughout our country. (Applause.)

There was little coverage -- (Applause) -- there was little coverage of the recent conviction of officials in Ohio for rigging the 2004 presidential election recount. If our media will not cover election fraud, then it’s not interested in preserving our democracy.

A VOICE: You bet.

MR. ADAMS: Commissioners, do you want to be remembered as someone who further stifled the flow of information and undermined democracy or as someone would acted to preserve the will of the press in our democracy.

Thank you very much. Please choose
MR. SIGALOS: Will the following people -- will the following people now please head to the microphone.

Brandy Doyle, Louise Thompson, Pat Burke, Jane Acre, Brad Ashwell and Donna Reed.

A VOICE: I just want --

MR. SIGALOS: Brandy Doyle, Louise Thompson -- sir?

A VOICE: -- supposed to hand out a copy of Aaron Russo's Americans for Freedom packet.

They asked me to offer copies to --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much, sir.

(Applause.)

Again, Brandy Doyle, Louise Thompson, Pat Burke, Jane Acre, Brad Ashwell and Donna Reed, if you'd just come to the nearest microphone.

And now Mr. John Russell.

MR. RUSSELL: Thank you very much.

My name is John Russell. I'm one of those congressional candidates which is contesting the results of the election for 2006 -- (Applause) -- here in Florida, one of the elections contests that you've not heard about (sic.)

As the introductory speaker said, the public owns the airwaves, and the public wants them back. (Applause.) George Orwell -- (Applause) -- George Orwell would roll over in his grave today if he were here to see what's
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going on.

We're going to a place in this country that we do not want to go, and it is a consolidation of the corporate news media that is going to take us there.

While efficiency is the rationale, one must look at it's not about quantity of news or news repeated endlessly over and over again, much of it just about entertainment or figures thereof, it is about the quality and objectivity of the information that is provided to the public so that they can make quality decisions when they talk about making decisions that are key to their life as well as politics.

And what I have for you here today is very cogent and must be considered. But when we talked about the Tribune and being grandfathered in, well, throughout the elections they used Survey USA as a poll that they pushed at least four times in the general

election.

And this was a poll that was conducted using statistically irrelevant methodology. And while we conducted our own poll using Rastus in Research, which appears on the April 10th front-page edition of the Tampa Tribune, Rastus in Research being in the 1 percent efficiency.

Survey USA is not even mentioned. I rest
my case. They will not even cite their own poll when they talk about "Bad Lines, Dumb Society" or "Polls Get It Right."
Your own poll, Tampa Tribune did not get it right, and it was published in -- (Inaudible) -- hurting people's right to know what is true and objective.
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
MR. RUSSELL: Thank you very much.
MR. SIGALOS: Brandy Doyle.
MS. DOYLE: As a correspondent for the Sarasota Harold Tribune, I'd like to talk to you about the state of the newsroom in a world of increasingly consolidated media ownership; however, I've never actually been inside the newsroom, except on the day my contract was signed.
With no real competition, dailies like the Harold Tribune cut corners by outsourcing much of their local news coverage to freelancers like myself.
I don't have a journalism degree or training as a professional journalist. I get no health insurance benefits or job security. I have little profession contact with others who work at the paper. I get no real feedback from my editor. And I've never been asked to write a second draft of a story.
In fact, I'm really discouraged from providing coverage that's too in-depth or controversial. I write for the community news...
My colleague told me that it was bake off speed (sic.) But it's not just bake off, it's done cooked off -- (Inaudible) -- end up here, with the news section with stories which could've been developed into informative, meaningful pieces are relegated to the media equivalent of junk food (sic.)

When a community group organizes around a social issue, we usually cover it, but with photos of people standing around holding plaques, not with real research into the problems for our community.

I want to add, the Harold Tribune, which is a New York Times paper, is not a bad paper. But, unfortunately it's a typical one. While I can't speculate about the people who own newspapers and TV stations, at the editorial level, at least, I don't get the impression that most people are actively trying to squelch debate or suppress minority viewpoints.

The problem is that uncovering and investigating local issues just doesn't fit into business model of today's media outlets. With more consolidation it's only going to get worse.

Don't lift the caps on media ownership. The public interest isn't served by big conglomerates that treat local news as just
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another product to be made as cheaply as possible. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Louise Thompson.

MS. THOMPSON: I'm Louise Thompson. I'm the executive director of the local public-access channels for Tampa and Hillsborough County and the Greater Tampa Bay Community Network.

Although I've stayed there nine years, I've been working with a nonprofit group that took over those channels from the cable companies and have been fighting every step of the way to make sure that the public's voice is still available on the air.

There would be no big crowds coming there to the public access station if their voices were being heard elsewhere. I'm with a group that wanted to do civic and community journalism in the face of what's happening in the media.

With the largeness of the Tampa Tribune and other our places and the fact that they're interested, as they should be, in their corporate bottom line, there are less reporters available, less time for those reporters to be available to cover the kinds of issues that are important to us locally. There is no localism.

If it were not for the public access
channels or the community radio station, WMNF, a lot of those issues would never, ever be covered in the corporate -- (Inaudible.) People that come to us, musicians who cannot, because of Clear Channel's ownership of eight or nine channels here in our marketplace, cannot, like the musicians that I grew up with, go to their local radio station and get their music played.

And so the public access station, we play local musicians' music overnight on our community bulletin boards. Because they can't get coverage someplace else. We have voted in the darned wrong- -- wrongest people in the universe, because our reporters don't have time to investigate half of them. I mean, if the -- am I wrong here?

(Applause.)

We've voted, now, locally, nationally, we've got the worst people in -- are not -- are not covered well enough, nor the missions of our environmentalists. Please keep the cap. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Pat Burke.

MS. BURKE: Thank you. Good evening.
Having said that, I am here tonight to say that I'm in opposition to any loosening of media ownership rules. (Applause.) I know how corporate works, and I have some idea of how government works. And knowing this, I can tell you, this is a very bad idea.

Corporate works for shareholders, and government works for the party. I am confident that you, as FCC members, will see this for what it is and not allow it to happen.

One of our most cherished freedoms is knowing that news is being reported honestly and without prejudice. A free press is necessary for democracy. With any loosening of these rules, this could change, and certainly not for the good of the people.

The public is way too smart to want this change. And I thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Jane Acre.

MS. ACRE: Thank you Commissioners for being here. It's very important that you are here.

My name Jane Acre. I've been a broadcast journalist across the country for more than 20 years including, most recently, here in Tampa.

As a medical reporter for Channel 10, I...
was frequently approached by public-relations professionals and CEOs, trying to convince me that their latest product deserved news coverage. They were usually very persuasive.

When I hear from convergence supporters that sharing online radio and television newsrooms is a good thing, I have to disagree. Sharing one newsroom means that PR folks only have to pass their information through one set of eyes.

What if the product is defective?

What if the marketer is in it for a quick financial hit at the public's expense?

What if PR is selling a flawed public policy?

It's one-stop shopping for the market; but for the public, fewer eyes means less scrutiny for the products and the news and information.

When I began as a radio news director in 1978, part of the job was filing the FCC community ascertainties, which was a sort of checks and balances to make sure we were serving the public. That was then. Today there are no community ascertainties required; in fact, no news is required.

I believe the FCC should return to those tougher mandates and remind broadcasters the use of the airwaves is a special privilege. (Applause.) Traditional business models need
not apply to something so vital to democracy.
That is indecent.

And, Commissioners, you say the public
can file a complaint. In January of 2005, my
husband and I challenged the operating license
of the Fox-owned station right here in Tampa.

We have proven in court that top ranks of
management engaged in news distortion (sic.)
Resisting them cost us our jobs. More than
two years later we have yet to receive any
response from the FCC on the status of that
complaint. Meanwhile, the station continues
to broadcast business as usual.

Chairman Martin, if you ask the public to
help you regulate, do so. Work in the public
interest by regulating this precious and
limited commodity of the airwaves. Thank you.
(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. ASHWELL: Hi. My name is Brad
Ashwell, and I'm the consumer democracy
advocate with the Florida Public Interest
Research Group. We're a nonpartisan,
statewide, nonprofit public interest advocacy
group. We work on a number of different
issues.

And before I go to any of them, I just
want to thank you for coming. I can't express
how important it is that you're here,
exemplifying the importance and the gravity of
these issues to the Tampa Bay Area and
Florida, in general. So thank you.

And I'd also like to point out that, you know, due to the early nature of this meeting, a lot of people couldn't make here as early, because of the -- you know, it's a -- it's a Monday or it's a workday. But we expect more people to come as the night goes on. And we hope that you withhold any judgment or impressions of the Tampa media area until you've heard from everybody.

Now, as an advocate working on a lot of different issues, I look at the media almost every day. And they're, you know, extremely helpful. But one thing that increasingly surprises me is the fact that every time I talk to them they ask fewer and fewer investigative probing questions.

More and more, it just seems like sound bites really rule the day. If I don't have a good sound bite, I'm not going to get quoted, my message isn't going to get into the story. And that's the sad truth.

And I can't help but attribute this to the fact that media consolidation is leading to more streamlined and less staffing and less time to really focus on the stories and get behind their own people and to tell the truth.

I think we are going to find ourselves interject -- in injecting something that --
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(Inaudible) -- fact-based information for public debate.

But, you know, we -- we attribute a lot of the sound-bite news culture to media consolidation. We think it's a negative trend.

Conversely, we actually benefit from media consolidation in lots of ways. I can make two calls from the Capitol. You know, we have offices here in Florida. We have offices in Tampa, Tallahassee and Miami.

From the Capital, where I get to work, I can make two calls to a few of these stations. And that's going to go across the entire state, media consolidation isn't good for the public -- (Inaudible) -- of important goals we have to put that over the powers of the -- (Inaudible) -- and best interests. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Would the following people please come to the nearest microphone. Robert Supe or Supay, Dottie McKinnon, Barbara Ribold, John Schuler, Linda -- Linda Overhouse.

Donna Reed

MS. REED: Good evening, Commissioners. I'm Donna Reed, the vice president of news for the publishing division of Media General. I have over 32 years of experience as a reporter and editor at the Tampa Tribune, including as managing editor.

During that time I worked with Dan
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Bradley and others at Media General to design and launch the news center. I know firsthand that convergence has strengthened print, broadcast and online journalism in Tampa, all to the benefit of the public.

Through convergence, the combined staffs have gained greater access to sources in the community. Time and again, that has resulted in more hard-hitting investigative pieces than if they had acted alone.

These stories have included exposes on disintegrating bridges, a collapsed expressway and lapses in hurricane preparedness. Overall, convergence has allowed media journalists to serve communities better in times of crisis and to foster community discourse.

In five additional markets across the southeast, convergence strengthens news at Media General's television stations and newspapers. Since convergence began, the TV stations in four of these five markets have added between seven and a half hours to 30 minutes of local news each week. In the fifth market, the station has continued to offer more than 20 hours, solely, of local news.

I want to emphasis that local news departments decide what platforms tell what stories. Because values do serve community to community (sic.) So there is no way that this
news coverage can be dictated by Media General. It just doesn't work that way.

Convergence means residents in small markets receive the same benefits as the residents of Tampa with higher-quality local news. This approach promotes a more informed citizenry, which is something that should be of growing concern to the FCC against the backdrop of -- (Inaudible) -- across current in broadcast news industries (sic.)

I'm glad that's helped the Tampa Tribune, WFLA and Media General bring more news to our communities. And I urge the FCC to permit the same service in more communities, large and small, across the country. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

Robert Supe.

MR. SUPE: Hello Commissioners. My name is Robert Supe. I'm president of Action Audits (sic.) We're a public interest firm. My firm has responded to a number of your MPRMs (sic.) And we have matters that are pending -- (Inaudible) -- before the full commission. I presume the ex parte rules don't apply here this evening.

But, anyway, the best way to look at consolidation is to recognize that in science it's best to predict future outcomes by examining past circumstances. So where does consolidation work?
Well, in the media it's worked well in China, the USSR, Cuba -- (Applause) -- and in Germany. This is where the media spoke with a common voice to reinforce political ideology.

Second case study, Agra Business, federal tax incentives of the '60s, '70s and '80s resulted in the demise of small local independent farms where farm-to-market distance was but a short drive. Corporate farms were quickly followed by multinational corporations, food processors, and the like, which resulted in contaminated foods -- remember salmonella -- and in contaminated pet foods, melamine.

So, media consolidation, the conventional wisdom says consolidated newsrooms lead to better reporting. But it really doesn't. It leads to a single voice dedicated to supporting or discrediting or hiding stories that are injurious to national and multinational interests.

You must recognize that consolidation -- for what it is, what it really is -- is a way to improve the corporate bottom line, not the human condition.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. SUPE: No other culture --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Dottie McKinnon.
My name is Dottie McKinnon. I'm here to speak of my experience with Media General, owner of the Tampa Tribune and WFLA News Channel 8. My up-close-to community for over 20 years, being a former Hillsborough County commissioner and one of the founders of Joshua House, a home for abused children and now building another shelter for 60 abused children.

Jim Zimmerman was also one of the founders of Joshua House when he was with Channel 8. He's now in Richmond at Media General. But he shared the Joshua House board for many years until he relocated to Richmond.

Channel 8 helped us with videos, provided PSAs, provided financial help in building those facilities for over 60 children. Gail Stearns, co-anchor of the 6:00 and 11:00 o'clock news has volunteered every year for Joshua House, MC's our luncheon for 500 people, is always available to help us.

And the Tampa Tribune has been fair and objective in their reporting. As a county commissioner I didn't always appreciate some of their publicity. But you're fair game when you're a public official. And we always gave them plenty of material. But I have to say it was fair and balanced.

To be honest, I also read the
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St. Petersburg Times every day. And they also provided financial support in building Joshua House. It's obvious the Times, by circulation, has not been hurt by their competition and being owned by a company that also has a TV station.

My husband and I have travelled quite a bit. And I take my computer with me to be able to read the Tampa Tribune and the St. Petersburg Times online.

I realize that with digital communications, newspapers are getting less circulation. I have never seen a case where a reporter was slandered in any way because both a newspaper and television station was owned by the same owner.

Bottom line, having Media General as owner of a newspaper and a television station has only strengthened their commitment to this community by their strength, not restricted. They have certainly helped the quality of life here by their involvement, and they give back to this community. Lifting the ban (sic) would surely increase competition for Media General.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

MS. MCKINNON: But that's the free enterprise system. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Barbara Ribold.
MS. RIBOLD: Hi. My name is Barb Ribold. I'm the executive director of the Pediatric Cancer Foundation. And I want to thank you for the opportunity to share with you my experience with WFLA and why media is so important to nonprofit organizations as the Pediatric Cancer Foundation.

WFLA and its affiliates, TBO.com and the Tampa Tribune have always supported organizations in the community who have a message that needs to be heard and who improve the quality of life of those around us. They have helped the Pediatric Cancer Foundation educate the general public about the high incidence of childhood cancer and the lack of funding for the number one killing disease of our children in the United States.

WFLA has helped give a voice to childhood cancer. When many pharmaceutical companies and government agencies have said that children with cancer are not a priority, WFLA has said, "Yes, they are."

The support we receive from WFLA, TBO.com and the Tampa Tribune allows us to create awareness and funding for research to find a cure for childhood cancer, something that comes a lot easier for organizations in dealing with adult cancers because of the numbers.

One of the big advantages for us is the power of their convergence. We can
communicate our message on TV, the Internet and the newspaper in one coordinated effort. This is much more efficient, and the results are exponential, using all three mediums simultaneously.

On behalf of the children and the families battling childhood cancer, I commend WFLA and its affiliates for doing their homework, understanding our challenges, our mission, and most importantly, giving back to the community. Thank you for listening. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

John Schuler.

MR. SCHULER: Good evening, Commissioners. My name is John Schuler, and I'm the president of the Florida Communications Group of Media General.

In this position I oversee the operations of Media General's converged properties here in Tampa, which include WFLA, Tampa Tribune, Centro and TBO.com.

Now, contrary to what you've heard from many people this evening, convergence allows Media General to bring more high quality local news more rapidly to the community and others. Our numerous journalistic awards and repeated rating successes speak to the quality of our local news product.

With convergence we have been able to...
bring this greater quantity and quality of local news to the community without sacrificing diversity.

The staffs of each of our properties operate totally independently. And I am aware of no instances in which our corporate headquarters have ever been involved in determining local news content.

Convergence has also helped us deliver more and better news at a time of rising financial pressures on broadcast and on print media.

Despite rising TV expenses, evaporating net worth, compensation and increasing pressure from other advertising outlets, Media General has been able, through convergence, to grow its news content and to retain the news broadcast staffs.

Mr. Klinenberg's comments made about the Tampa Tribune about reducing the staff by 70, what he didn't tell you is that no local beat reporters were among the 70. Local news coverage isn't declining at Media General. We have added and invested in local news resources, and we will continue to do so.

With television stations around the country cutting back on local news, I believe that Media General's convergence initiatives will ensure the continued provision of a strong local news product.

And with that, I urge the FCC to make the
changes necessary to allow convergence in all markets. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

I'd remind everybody that microphone works as well. I'd like to get the following people to head to their nearest microphone. Mark Lunsford, Fran Solomon, Kimberly Markus, Joseph Kyles, Hal Hogan and Tim Lalonde.

Linda Overhouse.

MS. OVERHOUSE. Thank you. Hello Commissioners, and thank you for allowing us to speak tonight. The local -- I'm -- I'm the executive director of the Spring of Tampa Bay, and we're the certified domestic violence center here in Hillsborough County.

The local media here is one of our strongest partners, next to law enforcement. The media helps us to increase awareness to victim families in need. The media also allows us to quickly and efficiently get our message out to prevent domestic violence, protect victims and promote change in lives, families and communities.

They allow us to do this in a way that we, the nonprofits, just would not be able to do otherwise. About half of the people that we see at the Spring say that they come to us
because they learned about us through the media.

This not only allows us to increase awareness about domestic violence, but it's actually helping us to save the lives of victim families in this community. I'm here today to support and commend our local media. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
Mark Lunsford.

MR. LUNSFORD: Hi there. I guess I don't want where to start out, but what the media -- I get emotional 'cause, really, I'm going to tell you some things.

My God, I can't believe I'm hearing that someone has to tell you that you can't change the way media has done things for me and the children across America.

Because of the media being there for me and letting me say what I want to say, thousands of children's lives have been changed. And it has had an impact on them, because of Jesse's Law or the Florida Lost Child Safety Act or just due to awareness and educational benefits to inform people of everything that's going on around us about, well, you know, pedophiles.

The media has never let me down. In 29 states, all over, whether I speak on radio shows in England or even through the news media and the newspapers in Germany or China
or even TV stations, the media has given me
the opportunity to tell America where people
are failing our children.

That's pretty -- that's pretty important.
If you change things, and it has an impact on
what I do -- not me alone, but hundreds of
child advocates -- and the message that we're
trying to get across, I mean, basically,
without our children -- and you guys were kids
once -- we have to be able to put out the
information that needs to be put out,
education, awareness, legislation.

And the media, and I can't think of any
channel that wasn't there for me. And when I
first met them, I said, "I need your help," I
couldn't believe how many trucks were at my
front yard with no hesitation.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.
MR. LUNSFORD: Thank you. (Applause.)
MR. SIGALOS: Fran Solomon.
MS. SOLOMON: Good evening. My name is
Fran Solomon, and I am the marketing manager
for the Tampa Tribune. I've been in this role
for 15 years, working closely with many
not-for-profit organizations in the Tampa Bay
region to help them accomplish their goals,
primarily making our community a better place
to live for all of our residents.

We work with approximately 130
not-for-profit organizations over the course
of a year. In many cases, we coordinate our support with WFLA-TV, TBO.com and our weekly Spanish-language newspaper, Centro.

The Tampa Tribune by itself is a powerful advertising medium to help these charities promote their fundraising events. And together with WFLA, TBO and Centro, we extend our reach through the entire PMA.

This greatly enhances the support that we can give to our region's charities. Charities that have experienced the full range of our support have been awed by the community response received.

Susan Harmaty, Executive Director of the Gasparilla Distance Classic Association, has said, “Since 1978 the Distance Classic Association, Tampa Tribune and WFLA News Channel 8 have worked together to grow and nurture a partnership that benefits the entire Tampa Bay community and several worthy Bay Area news charitable organizations.

Providing valuable promotional space and airtime, both of which are crucial to the event, has led to staggering success to the Distance Classic Association.

More than one million riders and walkers have crossed the finish line, and $2.5 million has been donated to the Boys and Girls Clubs of Tampa, Girls, Incorporated, of Pinellas, the Friends of Tampa Recreation and several running-related programs."
Our mission is to enrich lives through community and through democracy. The combined force of our marketing capabilities across the Tribune, WFLA, TBO and Centro when applied apply to the area's not-for-profit agencies does an amazing job for the first two missions, enriching lives for this community.

Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

Kimberly Markus.

MS. MARKUS: Hello. My name is Kimberly Markus, and I'm the executive director of the Public Policy Institute and director of media communications for the Rainbow/PUSH Coalition."

Today I'll be reading comments on behalf of Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., President and Founder of Rainbow/PUSH Coalition. Today I'm going to be heard and not just tolerated.

A national outrage occurred when Don Imus used our public airwaves to verbally assault the young women of the Rutgers basketball team. He is gone. But this is an issue that goes beyond Imus.

At the heart of those remarks there's a gap between who owns the airwaves, the people or those who bought and sold the airwaves. It is an issue of diversity, giving all of American access to the airwaves, to the
newsroom, to the producers, to the writers and
to those who share a broader point of view.

Free Press found that none of the more
than 60 stations that aired Imus In The Morning
at the time of the calculation were own by a
minority. And the stations that aired Imus
were more likely to be owned by a large-group
owner, companies that own stations in multiple
markets or own more than three stations in a
single market.

Owners and publishers choose editors,
writers and on-air personalities. They choose
priorities and ultimately, at least, for the
content (sic). Giving us indecent hate speech
from shock jocks like Don Imus all day, all
night, all white, clearly does not represent
the diversity of American culture.

(Applause.)

With most of our TV and radio stations
controlled by giant corporate conglomerates,
now less than 10 percent of TV and radio
stations are owned by minorities or women, we
all deserve the right to share our point of
view.

But instead of addressing the national
disgrace, the Federal Communications Commission
is actually trying to let the larger companies
buy up even more stations, drowning out
minority and female voices.

Our -- (Inaudible) -- Free Press found
that the current state of the broadcast TV
industry does not represent our country's diversity.

Women comprise half of the U.S. population but own less than 5 percent of the broadcast TV stations. Minorities comprise a third of the U.S. population but own approximately 3 percent of the broadcast stations.

In short too own -- own too much at the expense of too many (sic.) I am submitting the complete testimony of Reverend Jesse L. Jackson, Sr., to be included in the transcripts of this hearing. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.


MR. KYLES: I already said thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. KYLES: To Mr. Chair and your distinguished colleagues, I'd like to, first of all, say thank you for allowing us this opportunity to speak to you today.

I'd like to bring a historical approach and talk a little bit about some of the positives things that happen when diversity and community local participation really works well.

In 1968 Dr. Martin Luther King came to Memphis to work on behalf of sanitation workers. African-American men who were not
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being treated fairly wanted the decent right
to work hard and earn a decent pay.

Dr. King was eventually, as you know the
story, assassinated. He was shot with a
bullet large enough to penetrate the exterior
walls of his -- (inaudible) -- with a
high-powered rifle; a peaceful man that had a
violent end.

Had it not been for the small radio
stations and the local papers, those like
Tri-State Defender, Lincoln Civil Star News
(sic), AM 1340 WLAA AM, if it had not been for
those small organizations, there would not
have been an opportunity to help the community
heal.

Because if you speak from one voice and
if those that are in power continue to hold
that power and unjustly don't serve the
community, those are some of the things that
we are having to deal with.

I come to you from Memphis, Tennessee.
And it was important for me to come to Tampa
to speak about this issue. Because something
is going to have to change, if we are going to
face the problems.

And one thing I would like to share with
you, Sears and Roebuck, in 1971 -- after
Operation Push was founded, People of the
United States to Served Humanity -- we were
organizing to make sure that those in the
community could come out of this with some
sense of a healing and hope.

And when you continue to have suppression, and when there is not hope -- right now, when you think about the amount of money that's been spent on Katrina, in the rebuilding effort, but still there are millions of people who want to ask questions, they want to know why hundreds of thousands of folks haven't had a chance to back home -- it's because you are hearing enough of a diverse message.

So I ask you to just consider -- sincerely consider this and make sure that there an opportunity to resolve. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Hal Hogan:

MR. HOGAN: Good evening. I'm going to just say something nice about someone.

My name is Hal Hogan. And I'm a long-time viewer of Channel 8. When I found out that they used volunteers, I wanted to be part of that. I'm happy to say that I have done so for 12 years.

Just to touch -- my background includes 34 years at Trans World Airlines in master service, including 22 years as a supervisor responsible for all TWA passenger activity at an airport.

If any of you has ever flown anywhere, you know what happens to the -- (inaudible) --
But I'm here to speak about the good that Channel 8 does for its viewing community. Just a few of Eight's charming -- Channel 8's community service projects are a five-day-a-week ongoing community consumer help line, paint-your-heart out projects, hurricane help lines, All Children's Hospital fundraisers, holiday travel help lines, specialized call-in lines, such as the Breast Cancer Awareness and the food bank collection and sorting.

All of our volunteer workers as -- and coordinated by Channel 8's Laurie Stokes. We do so much good work for the community. And I just wanted you to know how committed we at Channel 8 are. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Will the following people please go to the nearest microphone has. Merle Allshouse, Suzanne Willet, Guy Maxfield, Susan Fox, Stephanie Shreve and Erica Rogers.

MR. LALONDE: Last night when I was in my car listening to the radio around 6:30 a.m. on a Sunday morning, I was tuned in to a music station. But at this hour it was airing a community story. I listened to it for a few
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minutes, but it failed to keep my attention. So I switched the station. To my surprise, I found the same story playing.

Just for the sake of curiosity, I went through the entire FM spectrum, digital C button (sic.) I counted eleven -- six radio stations playing the same story. All six stations owned by Cox out of Atlanta, Georgia.

I find it hard to believe that classic rockers, alternative rockers, hip-hoppers, easy listeners, country music listeners are so much in sync that one story speaks for all of them. (Applause.)

I find it more difficult to believe that these six stations would be playing the same story if it were owned by six different companies with six different owners representing their actual audience.

We hear much talk about the free market. The free market does a great job of deciding which products are deserving of your hard-earned dollars.

Steve Johnson revolutionized the way we listen to recorded music. With the iPod, he cornered the market on mp3 players. But let us not confuse the free market with the marketplace of ideas. In the true marketplace of ideas, the environment is created with a lot of fast (sic) ideas that come forward, uninhibited.
In a free market the cornering of the
market is the end game, blocking out all the
competition. When this model's allowed into
the marketplace of ideas, we end up with the
kind of competition that attempts to squash
out ideas and voices instead of nurturing
them.

In 1996 the marketplace of ideas was
bruised and battered. Today we decide whether
we should put it out of its misery or nurture
it back to health along with our democracy.
Let the free market compete for our
discretionary dollars. Let a healthy
diverse and vibrant --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
MR. LALONDE: -- marketplace of ideas
compete for our hearts and minds. Thank you
very much.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
Merle Allshouse.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Merle Allshouse.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Suzanne Willet.
MS. WILLET: Thank you, Commissioners,
for being here and having us in Tampa today.
Thank you, everybody else, for attending this
meeting.

If I want to learn about this country, I
have to leave this country. When I was in
Winnipeg, I learned about the soft-wood lumber
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dispute between the United States and Canada.

When I was in Edmondton, I learned that
Canada is the largest supplier of oil into the
United States.

When I was in Germany, I learned more
about the aftermath of Hiroshima in one
documentary than I have on the History Channel
for the past ten years.

Finally, to find about CDL --
(Inaudible) -- I have to catch her on speaking
at a coffeehouse or hopefully catch it on
Democracy Now.

I ask the commissioners: Do I have to
become Canadian to learn about the United
States?

Is not the voice of media in this country
narrow enough, and do we have to make it
narrower? Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Guy Maxfield.

MR. MAXFIELD. Good evening, ladies and
gentlemen. My name is Guy Maxfield, and I'm
representing the C News TV.com (sic), an
Internet broadcast company.

I grew up in '58, so of watched
television come from something that I had a
lot of potential, a lot of good things were
happening.

What happened is my question. Because I
watched where Mussolini and Hitler took new --
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took books, burned books and had one point of
view, and it led to being burning up.

If we're not careful, our future
generations and our children could be burning
up or worse. One person should not be able to
determine the image or the message that you
hear and only that message.

We've got to wake up. We've got to stop
moving in the direction that we're moving.
This opportunity with the media is so amazing
and important, we don't need to waste it.
Corporations get enough money as it is. They
going corporate welfare.

There's a public trust involved with
media, radio, television, print. And, yes,
the children need to be reading again. I got
a girl that was telling me her ear is hurting
because they don't want to read (sic.) Our
son drives me crazy with this.

There's a lot more I've got to be able to
say. I don't have enough time. But let me
finish off of this. If we're going to have a
future, as the leader of the world setting an
example for everybody else, we can't be afraid
of having opposing viewpoints.

We've got to be able to discuss and
impart -- (Applause) -- and debate. That's
democracy. If we're not going to be about
democracy, we may as well hang it up. Thank
you.

(Applause.)
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Susan Fox.

MS. FOX: I speak to you as president of the board of one of the rare community independent media outlets, and that's WMNF 88.5 on -- (Applause.)

We've been on the air 30 years, but we're sponsored noncommercial. We have about 100,000 listeners and about 10,500 member supporters.

And you have come to a town that knows about independent media. We know the difference, because we have it here, and we love that. We love independent media in Tampa.

We carry our own WMNF evening news where you hear about real issues, not just the car crashes and the crimes. We have the daily college show where people can discuss the issues.

We carry news about sustainable living, about alternative health, the Women's Show, talking about women's issues. We have a full block of African-American affairs on Sundays, followed by the Sunday Simco Jewish Affairs.

On Fridays we have two talk Muslim affairs. We have a Latin American radio show. We have out-in-the-open for gay, lesbian and bisexual communities. This is what democracy
sounds like.

A VOICE: You bet.

(Applause.)

MS. FOX: It's a diverse group of -

(Inaudible) -- and respond on a rational level

and try to seek understanding and common

ground.

But for the past two decades, we've seen

a retrenchment all across America in corporate

media. I'm going to file my full -- my

two-page remarks. But, obviously, we oppose

any further consolidation. And we think that

more community voices, like ours, needs to be

on the air. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Stephanie Shreve.

(Inaudible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Stephanie Shreve.

MS. SHREVE: Hi. My name is Stephanie

Shreve, and I'm a graduate student at the

University of South Florida in -- (Inaudible)

-- my studies. And I've been following the

media-ownership consolidation topic since 2002

with the biannual review then. And I have a

couple of comments that I'd like to make of

concern.

I believe that the further consolidation

of media is going to be moving more revenue

out of the local community and causing fewer

jobs and more of a Wal-Marting effect

on communities.

It's -- if the Commission is serious
about localism, competition and diversity, why not go back to the original rule, one outlet per -- per community. (Applause.)

And if consolidated media is really the best way to start with public interest, why is the majority of the public unaware of the media ownership -- (Inaudible) -- the future elimination of analog television as they know it, how digital interactive television will impact their lives.

If media wants to serve the public interests, they must make the public aware of the information they need to make informed decisions.

And we ask you to help us find our way to a balanced media landscape that can give us the hurricane coverage we need, as well as the opportunity for the public to get the information they need for democracy.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Would the following people go to their nearest microphone, starting with Number 27, Cynthia Mercer, James McCarthy, Beth Wolfe, Chris Brudy, Bill Bucolo and Andrew Rock.

Erica Rogers.

MS. ROGERS: Erica Rogers, Regional Vice President of the American Heart Association. Since 1948, the American Heart Association has
worked with the media to generate funds and educate the public about fighting vascular disease.

Here in the Tampa Bay Area, broadcasters work closely with our organization to achieve these results by sponsoring our fundraising events, hosting special media events and providing editorial coverage of the issues.

The local media sponsor of our fundraising events have, by doing so, by giving the agreed amount of public service announcements designed to drive attendance while also creating awareness about cardiovascular disease (sic.)

Thanks to media support of our local fundraising events, we've raised nearly 2.5 million dollars in Tampa Bay Area within the last 12 months.

Not only have the local broadcasters been generous with their donation and on their inventory, but they've also created their own special media events designed to teach Tampa Bay how to stop how diseases grow (sic.)

Each year the American Heart Association works with the local affiliates to host Charter Heart (sic) in February and Stroke Alert in May. Each event, at no cost to the American Heart Association, includes viable interviews, packaged stories, a day-long phone bank at the station in which viewers are encouraged to call and receive additional
Three years ago, during one of these events, a viewer called into the phone bank having just seen a story about a young woman suffering from a stroke. The viewer described having similar warning signs. She was quickly told hang up and dial 911. We received a note from that viewer a week later saying that story saved her life.

The American Heart Association teaches the community how to reduce the risk from heart disease through these special media events as well as through traditional editorial coverage.

I could recount dozens of examples, like the one I just mentioned, of the positive impact our partnership with local media has had on the people in our community.

The local media allows the American Heart Association to connect with hundreds of thousands of Bay Area residents each and every month in a meaningful, memorable and manageable way.

Our media partnerships are truly helping the Heart Association not only change lives but save them.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Cynthia Mercer.

MS. MERCER: I want to take a walk down memory lane. I'm a child of television. I...
grew up in the '50s and early '60s. And media -- and I actually remember when media were locally owned.

I had grew up in Charlotte, North Carolina. We had a couple of network television stations. The quality was poor, by today's standards, but it was local information and served the community.

There were farm reports in the early morning. There was a children's program later in the afternoon. There was usually a home-making show in the middle of the day.

And, by the way, the stars of the local children's program was available for birthday parties. And most of the kids knew this guy personally.

And these local shows advertised local businesses that many people in the community knew and -- and went to -- went shopping there. On the weekend there was usually a local bandstand-like show for teens.

The evening news was news, not a promo for network programming or cross-promotion for the station's sister newspaper. There was always an editorial that made you think. We often disagreed, but it was better than what we have now.

The radio carried a variety of programming. There were black-owned stations. The DJ programming was strictly local with a
few minutes of national news and sports on the half-hour.

Now my main sources of local and state news are our local public and community radio stations and the Internet and the St. Pete Times.

I tune out most of the commercial TV stations and all commercial radio. They no longer serve my needs. News is -- I get my television news for international and national from the BBC and PBS.

I would ask you, please, put the "local" back in local media and support democracy.

Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

James McCarthy.

MR. MCCARTHY: Good evening. I'd like to thank the Commissioners for coming to Tampa to listen to this. I'm a disabled veteran, and I've been in this position for 45 years.

I have some experience in the media, because I've worked for two newspapers and worked for a publisher in Hartford, Connecticut, and more recently have become involved with community nonprofit TV and radio here in Tampa.

As a concerned citizen, I try to gain news from as many possible sources as I can, because, frankly, I don't trust most of them. Recently, a couple of my more liberal friends...
chided me for reading the Tampa Tribune over the St. Petersburg newspaper.

I was informed that the Tribune wrote at the level of a fifth-grader, and the St. Petersburg newspaper wrote at the level of a ninth-grader. I am smarter than a fifth-grader.

I would like to congratulate some of the speakers, most notably the ones from the newspaper, the Neighborhood News, and the last speaker that spoke. He was right on the money.

It's unfortunate many of the decisions made in corporate America have to do with money. But in the case of the media, it's really tragic when they have their own agendas, and they slant the news, do their -- whatever they call it -- "spins" in order to accomplish their agendas. It doesn't say much for how we receive news in this country and is -- the problem is exacerbated by companies who own too many companies. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Beth Wolfe.

MS. WOLFE: My name is Beth Wolfe. I'm opposed to further media consolidation. I don't think the current arrangements serve the public interests.

The current level of media consolidation has created the illusion of diversity; media landscape that may appear diverse on its face
but in reality fosters little or no debate and includes little or no divergent perspectives.

In Tampa Bay, the only place where I can hear my perspective, hear from minority candidates or learn the details of government decisions made on my behalf is the community radio station, WMNF (Applause.)

The station that's been for -- finance the -- (Inaudible.) This community station has survived in spite of the corporate media environment not because of it.

Citizens are clamoring for access to media with diversity and local information. So 30 years ago activists walked door to door in this community soliciting contributions to start this radio station. And they still support it today, because it helps them be better citizens.

But in today's media environment, consolidation levels as they are, there would be no way that a commercial-free, listener-supported broadcaster could start up and survive.

Licensing restrictions aside, the idea of creating and funding another source of media doesn't seem urgent for most people, because they languish under the idea of this illusion of diversity.

People see a Spanish-language TV station or a newspaper, and they may assume it's owned
and operated by someone who's got an interest. But 99 times out of a hundred, it's owned by a media conglomerate, controlled by shareholders or wealthy PR firms on Madison Avenue.

Can the public interest be served best by those whose first priority is a 20-percent profit margin?

The video news release in convergent newsrooms who don't -- (Inaudible) -- they all play a part in lulling people into the illusion that they are local media outlets working to serve their interests, when actually the corporate bosses in cities far, far away have had their corporate filters on it first.

Community stations are one answer. But, again, starting one today from scratch, when people are already paying ever-increasing sums for cable TV and satellite radio, which creates this illusion of diversity, could be just like this shy of impossible (sic.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much. (Applause.)

Chris Brudy.

MR. BRUDY: My name is Chris Brudy.

Let's see, the biggest media companies will extend their reach further after this, even though it's gone far too far, as it is.

To be honest, the media should be fragmented down to the lowest level. It would
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be great if nobody owned more than one radio station, one newspaper, one channel;
unfortunately, that won't happen.

A remand of the Fairness Doctrine should be reinstated. Lapses should be severely punished.

A VOICE: That's right.

MR. BRUDY: The won't happen either. The reason is because the same people that own the mainstream media and the MSN are the same ones who are the war-profiteers, the same ones who financed, present control -- controlling the executive branch.

They are making big money on the war.

And they need to fool the America vacuum.

People need to get this back in (sic.) This is what the mainstream media does.

And all along, the United States is being run by traitors headed by Dick Cheney. These traitors with the MSN, own the whole oligopoly, have stolen the White House in 2000, they are going to straight on the attack, and they have -- in 9/11 -- killing thousands of Americans (sic.)

They were out to gain the U.N. and the American public with a wall of big lies concerning the attack. They fooled us into backing their invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq. And they were after all -- and the money that could be drained from the treasury
The fact that they had just finished assuming power in 2004 through the use of their voting machines was just an added bonus for them. It could've not've been done without the help of the Republican mainstream media oligopoly.

They've corrupted and criminally misused the defense, intelligence and law enforcement sectors in the federal government making this hearing really just kind of a side show. The real news story is treason, hundreds of treasons.

They need -- they need some help in this country, and that's from the free Internet. Thank God, there are still ways to get some information around. There are still ways to do -- and find out what has been actually going on here.

You should go with people like Bob Bowman and Mike Hooper and Gary Singh (Phonetic), Mark Adams, Clint Curtis and Prison Planet (sic), if you'd like to know more. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Bill Bucolo.

MR. BUCOLO: Good afternoon, Commissioners. I'm Bill Bucolo. Thank you very much for coming to the Tampa Bay to personally to hear our views on media ownership and consolidation.

I'm a media broker. And I worked in
print communications and in the general field of journalism for over 40 years. I currently publish an area-wide e-mail list of several hundred local -- (Inaudible) -- residents and activists.

Our founding fathers considered the free flow of information to be the life blood of our democracy. It is the prized right of Americans (sic.) Over 200 years later, we still, obviously, do not take it for granted, as you can see from your mail and the large audiences you draw to a public hearing.

That said, it must be clear what the public's opinion of the FCC's recent trends toward corporate consolidation is. Consolidation interferes with the free flow of information, because large corporations simply cannot serve local businesses and residents as well as local business and residents. (Applause.) And people have suffered because of it.

Unless you have decided that America needs less media diversity, less locally produced news, less responsive public service, you need to stop supporting corporate consolidation over local media.

Please encourage diversity. Also encourage more locally-produced news and entertainment. Make this mandatory, no matter who owns the media.
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And please keep this in mind about the
giant corporations who ask you to approve
owner consolidation. Be suspicious.
Corporations exist to make money, not to
provide a free flow of information.
I remind you, it is large corporations
who consistently oppose governmental roles in
universal health care, clean air, water and a
healthy government, our environment. Please
say -- that they oppose better safety
regulations in the workplace --
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
MR. BUCOLO: -- and developing
alternative energy, and only large
corporations -- (Inaudible) -- stop this
disastrous war.
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.
MR. BUCOLO: Corporations are killing us.
MR. SIGALOS: Will the following people
please go to the nearest microphone. Anne
Goldenburg, Wayne Sallade, Kristin McClanahan,
Mary Ann Massolio, Jamie Ewing and Ben
Winthrop.
Andrew Rock.
MR. ROCK: Commissioners, thank you very
much for taking your show on the road and
letting the public into the process for a few
hours. I really hope you will remember our
voices when you’re back inside the beltway
surrounded by lobbyists.
We are your constituents, not them. We
are the people who care about democracy, not them -- (Applause.) I'm here as a concerned citizen, who is incredibly concerned about the preservation of American democracy. And that's why I'm against further consolidation of the broadcast media.

Democracy relies on the press, now called the media, to inform us and provide diverse opinion. Unfortunately, the corporate broadcast media is not about informing the public. As Steven Wilson said, it's about selling to the public, what to buy, what to think, who to vote for.

My wife and I don't have a television. We didn't when we were raising our kids, and that's precisely because we wanted them to grow up as well-informed citizens and independent thinkers.

We prescribed to the -- we subscribe to the St. Pete Times, but we rely on WMNF and the Internet for our real news.

As we said earlier, it's amazing when you travel internationally to find there's better coverage of the United States in foreign papers than you find in our own shores.

Yes, the networks do a good job, pretty much, on the hurricanes. But what have you heard from them about global warming, until about ten days ago when it was impossible to
ignore?

Finally, I want to make a heart-felt plea to the Commission. TV and radio broadcasters should be required, as a condition of licensure, to provide free and equal time to all credible political candidates. (Applause.) Out elections should not be decided by which candidate raises the most money and pays for ads on television.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

MR. ROCK: Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Anne Goldenberg.

MS. GOLDENBERG: Hello. Good evening. I'm Anne Goldenberg. I'm the executive director of the Tampa Education Cable Consortium. We are a small, nonprofit local company that's made up of all of the local, educational and cultural institutions here in Hillsborough County.

We were created over 20 years ago to take advantage of the new thing in town, "Cable." We program now two 24/7, 355 days a year of noncommercial local educational programming.

Here's some examples of the programs you can find on our local channel that you can't find anywhere else. We have gavel-to-gavel coverage of all of our school board meetings. We have the Florida Department of Education come into town, we are there to give the public the entire unedited coverage.

We also provide our local college
students with over 52 college courses. So
whether you're a student at the University of
South Florida or HCC, you can get your college
telecourse.

We also provide Math Homework Hotline. I
don't know about your kids, but I know my kids
sometimes have a little bit of trouble with
math and, well, it is essentially the path
(sic) in today's world.

When our community looked at this issue
and asked how can we use television to help
our kids, Math Homework Hotline was what we
came up with.

We have great teachers who man the phones
every Monday, Wednesday and Thursday and help
our kids. There are TV teachers that take
live calls and off-screen teachers that take
calls. We've helped over 2,000 kids this year
and over 20,000 kids since we've been on the
air.

We've also made tutorials that are
available, not only on the air but on the web.
We also do things with our League of Women
voters, like school-board debates, so
candidates in our community can really have a
good understanding of what kind of school
policies are going to be affecting their kids.

We also have over 110 noncommercial,
nonviolent children's series on Saturday
mornings. If you turn on the education
channel on Saturday morning --
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
MS. GOLDENBERG: -- you will not
be cursorily interrupted. It's good stuff. We
want more good stuff. So please be very
careful when you're thinking about media --
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.
MS. GOLDENBERG: -- in public and about
how you can encourage a variety of public
discourses.
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.
MS. GOLDENBURG: Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Wayne --
Thank you. I'm not an elected official,
not a former politician, not a business person,
ot a disgruntled ex-employee. I'm the
emergency management director from Charlotte
County, Florida, Punta Gorda.
You heard Pat Roberts allude earlier this
afternoon to what we went through on August
13th, 2004, when we got the hurricane that was
coming to Tampa Bay.
As the hurricane was bearing down on us
with its winds of 150 miles an hour and gusts
over 190 miles per hour that would destroy
11,000 homes in our community, destroy six of
our schools, four fire stations and countless
lives, the broadcasters of my local radio
stations, one a small independent AM from the
west county, and the other, a Clear Channel 5
station conglomerate was by my side. They never left my side. Until we were forced to evacuate the emergency operations center, when the winds began to take the building apart, they stayed with me. They went with me to the hiding place where we rode out that hurricane that fateful Friday afternoon.

When the winds began to ease, they all wanted to leave before it was safe. I had to physically restrain them. When the Clear Channel guys got back to their studio, the roof was gone. They had the station back on the air -- one of their stations back on the air -- within about two hours.

They broadcast through the night for 18 hours to the people of Charlotte County, who had no other means communication. They kept on the air, talking to people, letting them tell us what was going on.

They kept their representatives at my emergency operations center throughout the days and weeks that followed, including Hurricane Frances and Hurricane Jeanne, which forced us to evacuate our facilities again.

Those folks from Clear Channel were there for us. And I just thought that side of the story needed to be told. That's one local news story that is very, very good news. And I'm very proud to be a partner and to have
And this is my chance to publicly thank them for their efforts on August 13th, 2004, and the weeks that followed. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Kristin McClanahan.

MS. MCCLANAHAN: Hi. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak tonight.

I work for Junior Achievement. I'm a marketing manager of Junior Achievement of West Central Florida. In case you don't know, Junior Achievement is a nonprofit organization that provides programs and activities to children, teaching them the economics of life.

Junior Achievement of West Central Florida feels the collaboration of eight Clear Channel stations has made a tremendous impact on our Bay Area and young people more so than anyone individual radio station would have been able to do or could ever do.

Clear Channel radio stations provide job-sharing experiences for hundreds of high school students throughout the year. Corporate team members volunteer inside the classrooms, teaching kids about the economics of staying in school.

And Clear Channel is a major sponsor of two enterprise villages on both sides of the Bay. By Clear Channel's support and contributions to Junior Achievement, they
impact more than 30,000 kids annually.

Clear Channel Communications is one of Junior Achievement's top partners in the community, providing the children with a unique experience that no other business could alone provide.

Their participation allows for kids to learn about mass communication and the business principles needed to support this industry in our community.

On a personal note, whether the media industry is being consolidated or broken up, as a young person with younger siblings, I feel that what's most important and what I would like to see happen in the media industry is a little bit of reformation.

I want to see more honesty. I hate that everything seems to be driven by what brings in the most ratings and what brings in the most money. I want to see good intentions, and I want to see what's best for the people, whether that's more or less, I just want to see what's best.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MS. MCCLANAHAN: Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Mary Ann Massolio.

MS. MASSOLIO: Good evening. My name is Mary Ann Massolio, and I'm the executive director for the Children's Cancer Center, which is a local 501(c)3 organization that's
been here in the Tampa Bay Area for about 30 years.

We've talked a lot tonight about organizations, Clear Channel's WFLA. What I wanted to do is kind'a tap into the individuals behind these big names.

Clear Channel is a huge company. It does what it needs to do. But what I want to do is talk a little bit about the above and beyond that these employees do.

They don't need to be at our fundraisers, they don't need to be at our children's funerals, they don't need to be arranging any -- (Inaudible). But they do. They have their jobs. They are required to do PSA. But what they do above and beyond is what I want to talk about today.

And Ron Diaz and Ian Beckles are two fine examples of that. As many of you maybe listened to them for sports reasons, you'll also hear that they do a lot of promoting of the Children's Cancer Center.

Ron had one of our teams on about two years ago on air, fell in love with this child, and as a result, has done on annual golf tournament every year, again on the side, off the air, behind the scenes.

But I want everyone to know that Ron Diaz has raised over $80,000 for the Children's Cancel Center, on his own, recruiting friends, as has Ian Beckles, as has Tom Doyle and Mike
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Olivera, who actually serves on the board here at the Children's Cancer Center.

And I know that they're very busy people, and I know that they have a lot of other things to do, but I wanted to put kind of a happy slant on it and a better slant on it and show you what they do.

The media tends to just advertise and show the bad side of our athletes and what's going on with media. And I'm here to say that there's a very nice side to them, as well, that we are a local charity and we depend very heavily on local support from the free local radio. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Jamie Ewing.

MS. EWING: Good evening everyone. My names id a Jamie Ewing. I am from ACORN, the Association of Community Organizers for Reform Now.

We are one of the groups that WMNF Radio was talking about, the door-knockers. I am a member and a chairperson at ACORN, so I feel that I can speak on this issue and represent many, many other people in our community.

We do not want these big conglomerates to come in and be able tell us what we can see, what we can hear or what we can read. What they will be doing is not only getting richer off of us, but they will be forming a
 They will dictate to us what we see, what we hear and what we read. We want to hear what is going on in our local communities. It is important to us that live here to know what is happening in our own communities. I don't care what's going on in Chicago, Illinois. It does not affect my life here in Tampa. We do not want these people to be able to come in and take over our lives. And that is virtually what they will be doing. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Would the following people please come to the microphone. Dr. Don Thompson, David Beaton, Lawrence Rossini, Arlene Sweeting, Sarah Kell, David Carr and Ellen Lasher.

Ben Winthrop.

A VOICE: -- what number?

MR. SIGALOS: I called just to Number 45. That's the last number. And I'm trying to time it. It's 7:15 now. We're trying to take our break at 7:30. Hopefully, I've done it about right. But that last name, Ellen Lasher, was Number 45.

Mr. Winthrop.

MR. WINTHROP: I'm cool.

MR. SIGALOS: Yeah.

MR. WINTHROP: All right. Good.

So, yeah, I'm Ben. And I just really want to say, what part of "Monopolies Are A Bad
Idea* do you people not seem to get anymore?

(Applause.)

I mean, really, okay. Like, look, I play the Parker’s Brothers, a little board game, for awhile, until when I was about eight years old. And I had a lot of fun with it. It was a great game. All right. If you want to take that same concept and apply it to our media market just strikes me as idiotic. And I really can’t think of a worse way to go.

Let me ask you a question. All right. How many people know that they have foreclosed -- there’ve been foreclosed homes in America; it’s risen by 300,000 homes in year (sic)?

All right. We’ve got four people. Come on. Now, there’s been numerous -- there -- there have been press conferences on this. There has been quite a lot to talk about this issue. There’s been studies reported and everything else. And all of this stuff has been sent to local media markets.

And we’ve got four people in here who knows that, who knows what’s going on with that, four people who know the number of homes being foreclosed on. Those are homes in our neighborhoods.

We’ve got people right now who are -- you know, they’re just losing everything, you got the elderly, first-time home buyers, young
families, couples -- everything -- losing everything. And, still, it's not really being report on that much.

And I ask, will these four people know what's going on with the home mortgage prices and other finance crises that are facing America today if we have further media consolidation.

And, I'm sorry, but -- (Inaudible) -- Monopoly board game, I general speak in -- yeah, I just talk trash to everybody around me. And I'm pretty sure that's what the rest of them will do, too. Thanks a lot.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Dr. Don Thompson.

DR. THOMPSON: I'm Dr. Don Thompson. I'm also a retired United Methodist minister and graduate of Dickinson College in Harrisburg area, where I learned critical thinking.

And my friend Dick told me the story of the minnow that was eaten by a fish, and the fish was eaten by the barracuda. And that's what's happening with media conglomerates. They're the barracudas that are eating up our valuable local sources, like WMNF and WSLR in Sarasota.

And we also have the Knight-Ridder information from our local newspaper in Bradenton, the Bradenton Harold. So these kinds of things that we're not getting in the media that's -- (Inaudible) -- itself and...
having its hench-people write about it so much, are not telling us the truth.

They didn't tell us about how Katherine Harris, the secretary of state, manipulated the 2000 election by deleting 90,000 voters from the rolls because they had names similar to felons in their record. We learned that from WMNF and WSLR and Frank Powell's (Phonetic), who happened to be an investigative reporter in the Manchester Guardian in order to survive a document with that kind of truth (sic.)

I also have been -- well, I listen to -- (Inaudible) -- when it starts. And we found that no invasion of Panama, not all of the South American newspapers, condemned the invasion of Panama, except the international Miami Herald. That should tell you something about conglomerate newspaper, video, TV, radio, how it operate. We need the enlightenment that has had -- (Inaudible)

through '54. And I think --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

DR. THOMPSON: -- do not allow the conglomerates to continue on their --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

David Beaton.

MR. BEATON: Hello, Honorable Commissioners. I, David Beaton, come to you today as the current chair of WSLR an LP-FM
Station in Sarasota. We are a nonprofit, low-power FM community station. We empower folks to understand the media, understand their community and understand their role in the community.

We build democracy every day by giving people and organizations a voice on the air every day, not at nonprofit golf classics or fundraising events, we give access to the media on the air.

In our market, Sarasota, the New York Times owns the local daily paper and the local cable news channel. So what primarily motivates commercial media consolidation? It is profit, not public service.

Community radio, on the other hand, is motivated by community involvement. We at community radio are beholden to our community, our Greek community, our Hispanic community, our youth, our seniors, our arts community, our environmental community, our civic community.

Capitalism is a great motivator, no doubt. But even greater is the freedom that our forefathers gave us. The right to campaign, to stop on the street corner and pass out the pamphlet of common sense was instilled in our Constitution at the age of 12 Ben Franklin first began to learn the business of printing the truth.
And Thomas Jefferson wrote, "The only security of all is in the free press."

A free press today is hard to find, though, to find in the corporate world, where a tangled web of ownerships exists, where marketing directors have more power than journalists.

I'm here today to say no to more consolidation and yes to community radio. The citizens have the right to the airwaves. So let's protect these rights today and get LP-FM stations primary status as to protect the citizens' airwaves.

Currently LP-FMs have a secondary status. We are requesting that you give them greater than primary status and create more access to the media for the citizens by expanding LP-FM and do away with third channel adjacent restrictions on the LP-FM licenses.

Thank you very much. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

Lawrence Rossini.

MR. ROSSINI: My name is Lawrence Rossini, from Bradenton, Florida. Mr. Chairman and Commissioners, thank you for this opportunity.

I co-host a news and information program on a community radio station, WSLR, low-power FM 96.5 in Sarasota. The value of our program...
and our station comes back to us every day from listeners who like what they hear. And we know the reason is the diversity of our voice, the multiplicity of perspectives, the absence of talking points and the sounds of the community echoing through the station.

We live in a world of corporate giants. We understand that. But the problem with media consolidation is not only the uniformity of these corporations, it's the sensorship caused by their corporate and political filters.

I, like many who have spoken before me today, have had the opportunity of living and working all over this great country of ours, the Pacific Northwest, Washington, D.C., New England, the Midwest, and now Florida. And I regret to say I've never been in a place, especially a major media market, where the mainstream media sees the world through a smaller lens than it does in Tampa Bay.

(Applause.)

Community radio and low-powered stations, such as ours, give a direct channel to the people's voice. And it's essential for a community to stay informed and keep aware of the broad range of viewpoints that are affected -- where the people are affected.

Divergent viewpoints are more likely to be carried on outlets like ours. It's important to preserve the smaller outlets.
And I urge you to oppose further media consolidation, to open up the spectrum, so that communities like ours can benefit from low-power stations with locally produced content. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Arlene Sweeting.

MS. SWEETING: I am here today to express my opposition to any relaxation or elimination of the public interests limits on media ownership.

In 2000 we, a number of people of here, applied for a low-power FM station, because we were dissatisfied with local news coverage and citizen access to media in Sarasota.

WSLR-LP 96.5 went on the air in the summer of 2005. Our call letters "WSLR" stand for Sarasota Local Radio. And that is our mission and our commitment, to serve our local community.

We have over 100 volunteers from the community that participate in programming and day-to-day operations of the station.

Joshua Rabo (Phonetic), our youngest programmer, is eight years old, and last year he was certified as the youngest DJ in the world by the Guinness Book of World Records (Applause.)

He does the Sunday morning cartoon show and takes -- (Inaudible) -- the air -- and every
other Saturday at the station. We have middle school students, high school students and college students involved in programming.

Our station was the result of an MX agreement with New College of Florida, and we strive to serve the youth in our community whose voice is often neglected when it comes to the mainstream media.

Youth are viewed as consumers of media, but not necessarily as voices to be heard on the air. At WSLR this is not the case. We serve as a training ground for future journalists and disc jockeys, giving people both young and old opportunities to experience the power of the media and to have fun too.

Having had the experience of working at WSLR-LP for almost two years now, I can say that LP-FMs provide a valuable community service and help to promote localism and diversity in broadcasting.

I hope the FCC will recognize the value of LP-FMs by awarding them primary status and protecting them from encroachment by full-power stations. It makes no sense that the only station in town willing to cover the city council meetings should get knocked off just because some top-40 station wants to shift away from the town it currently serves and move closer to an emerging population center.

I urge you to be true champions of democracy, diversity and localism by supporting
Sarah Kell.

MS. KELL: Thank you, Commissioners, for holding this hearing and allowing us to comment on this important issue. I'm one of those college students that Arlene was just talking about who's involved in WSLR in Sarasota, Florida. And I came here to encourage you-all to move away from consolidation and support local media.

It's important that the community has low-power radio, public TV stations and independent news to report on urgent local news in a timely manner, to represent diverse groups in the community and to provide information and dialogue on local matters of importance.

Commercial stations just do not do the job in these areas. Here's two examples from Sarasota, Florida. About two weeks ago, a fellow student of mine rode his bike down the street in my neighborhood and was assaulted by a gang with baseball bats.

I bike down that street regularly to get
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to work so, naturally, I was concerned. I called a reporter at the low-power community radio station. Right away, he did some research with the police department and reported that this was just one in a stream of recent biker attacks on that street and the parallel street.

No other media outlet in my community has covered this story to date. Community media reported on important bicyclist news in a timely manner.

Another example has to do with local political coverage. Just last month Sarasota was preparing for the city commission election.

The candidate information that Sarasota’s New York Times affiliate carries was minimal to none. And I couldn’t find any information on commercial radio or TV stations, other than the paid political ads.

I got that information, instead, through candidate forums held locally and rebroadcast on the LP-FM community radio stations as well as (inaudible) on that station and from a small independent paper.

These community media sources were able to cover candidate information in a more interactive and detailed manner than would other media.

In closing, I encourage the FCC not to
consolidate media ownership and to expand and
protect low-power and local media for the
health of our communities. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

David Carr.

MR. CARR: My name is Dave Carr. I'm a
former policy analyst for the U.S. Congress in
science and technology policy.

I really don't believe that you need us,
because I think you already understand the
situation very well. I think that this is, in
some sense, a farce -- (Applause.) So for --
some of you who have been put on this
committee specifically because you have -- you
will follow an agenda of your corporate owners
or corporate handlers, and what we say is
irrelevant.

But I want to try to change somebody's
mind on this committee. I'm going to take my
limited time to do it. This is what I have to
say. Our remarks today are not direct -- are
not addressed to all members of this
commission.

Those to whom my remarks do not apply
have my sincere appreciation for their public
service. Some people say we're in the mess we
are in as a nation due to incompetence. And
some say it's due to malevolence. I believe
it is due to incompetence and the malevolence.

It is clear to me and to many others that
the decisions of this body has seriously undermined the foundation of our democracy. The question in my mind is, what part of the problem are you; are you incompetent or are you malevolent?

Some of you, I am sure, don't even believe in the concept of the public interest. And, yet, you are part of an organization chartered to protect the public interest.

The American people you have been -- have been underserved by the corporate masters of media, if the agenda of which you have so assiduously advanced along in increased concentration of ownership.

This is not to say that you alone bear responsibility for our calamity. But you make the rules for those who rule the minds of America. Knowledge is power, and the denial of knowledge gives demagogues the opportunity to rule through unreasoned fears.

Among other things, this has led us to a costly and unnecessary war and undermining of our civil liberties and produced a populous often unable to understand where their interests lie.

I ask you to think beyond your interests in serving the media ogreists (sic) and think instead of what your parents would think about what you are doing to confront the --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

MR. CARR: -- the consequences for your
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decisions for your grandchildren. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Ellen Lasher.

MS. LASHER: Good evening, Commissioners and guests. My name is Ellen Lasher. I'm the community relations and programming director for WTSP-TV, the CBS affiliate here in St. Petersburg.

Annually, we produce many, many different local programs. Among them are hurricane specials. We produce specials highlighting local children who are available for adoption. We recruit foster parents.

We work very, very hard to make people aware of the draught conditions that are happening right now. And as a news station, we maintain a reporter in Tallahassee, so that she can provide a local spin on all of the actions that our state legislature is taking.

I want to talk just a little bit about the community outreach that we do. And, Commissioner Copps, I am very respectful of your caution to us about not highlighting our good works.

But as part of the United Foundation of Families, we are privileged to be able to distribute significant funds every year to local 501(c)3 nonprofit agencies. To date that amount has totaled over half a million dollars.
The programs that I'm talking about are partnerships with Poynter Institute for Media Studies, to help train high school journalism students.

We work with Big Brothers, Big Sisters on their Amachi Program, which helps provide mentors for kids whose parents are incarcerated.

We've worked with St. Petersburg ACORN to fund voter-registration drives, Kids Voting Tampa Bay for voter education. It's these kinds of things that our ownership of the Gannett Company -- the Gannett Foundation makes us a stronger local citizen. And for that we're very, very proud.

Additionally, every year we do a bone-marrow donor registry drive around the Martin Luther King holiday. To date we've added over 500, mostly minority, bone marrow donors to that national registry.

We take our mission very, very seriously to serve the Tampa Bay community. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Thank you very much for participating in this portion of today's hearing. We will temporarily adjourn and restart the hearing in 30 minutes at 8:00 p.m.

I know that there are many of you still seeking to comment, and Commission staff will remain here to ensure that your comments are heard and made part of the record in the
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Commission's Media Ownership proceeding.

Once again, the evening portion of our program beginning with the second panel will begin again at 8:00 p.m. Thank you.

(Applause.)

* * * * *

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MR. SIGALOS: As we move to our second panel discussion, I'd like to reiterate the ground rules very briefly.

Panelists, each of you will have five minutes to make your remarks, and I'll be strictly enforcing this time limit to leave as much time as possible for the public-comment period.

Members of the audience, one more time, please, please, listen respectfully to the panelists, even if you disagree with the views that they express. It's extremely important that we maintain our basic decorum, as we did earlier, and avoid unnecessary interruptions.

Thank you very much.

Okay. On this panel, Gerardo Reyes-Chavez, Coalition of Immokalee Workers. We'll have Glenn Cherry, President and CEO,
Chairman of the Board of Tama Broadcasting; Bob D'Andrea, President of the Christian Television Network; Dr. Karen Brown-Dunlap, President of the Poynter Institute; Bob Gremillion, President, CEO and Publisher of the South Florida Sentinel; Carol Jenkins, President of the Women's Media Center; Larry Lee, Jr., Owner of WFLM-FM, WIRA-AM, Port St. Lucie, Florida; Luis Lopez, Director of Public Relations, Hispanic Alliance of Tampa Bay; Carlina Rodriguez, Director of Organizing Spanish Language, Screen Actors Guild of America; Som Rosenwasser, President and General Manager of WTSP-TV; and Rich Templin, Communications Director, Florida AFL-CIO.

We're going to start off with Mr. Reyes-Chavez, who is going to make his presentation in Spanish, and we're going to translate it into English for you.

Mr. Chavez.

MR. CHAVEZ: My thanks to the Commissioners for inviting me here today. My name is Gerardo Reyes-Chavez. I am a farmworker living in Immokalee, Florida, and a member of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. I am here to describe how important a local and accessible media system is to farmworkers and to demand that the FCC not just stop the consolidation of media ownership but expand and protect the truly local media we need to
survive.

For a poor community, like ours, that has few economic resources and faces daily violations of our human rights, it is difficult to have access to commercially-controlled media most of the time.

In the past, when we wanted our community to hear an important message about their basic rights, we had to pay for time on the air and hope that the commercial station wanted to grant us that time.

Media consolidation risks thousands of worker lives. Many farmworkers speak indigenous languages, like Mayo, Kanjobal and Creole. Many times, Spanish is our second language.

But, like everyone else, we need the media to reach us when there is danger. Farmworkers live in trailers that are in bad condition and are often frightened or confused when storms move through, and they cannot understand the warnings coming their way.

When this happens, we have a hard time understanding the warnings that come through the radio, especially if they don't -- are not fluent in English or Spanish.

The smaller communities where farmworkers live, like Immokalee, lose details, coverage, than safer, larger markets, like Naples, Tampa
In 2003 we built our own low-power radio station called Radio Consciencia or WCIW-LP, broadcast at 107.9 in Immokalee. While most workers have little access to the Internet, newspapers or television, Radio Consciencia gives Immokalee a voice and provides our community with the information it needs.

When Hurricane Wilma hit Immokalee in 2005, we realized the deep value of Radio Consciencia. All of the local radio stations were transmitting alerts on the impending hurricane, but Radio Consciencia was the only radio station that was transmitting information on where to go and what to do, in Spanish, in the indigenous languages spoken in our community.

When many of the farmworkers had to work in the field as the hurricanes approached and did not return home until transportation to shelter being provided by Collier County had stopped running or people were confused about what was happening, they were able to contact us at the radio station to find out the current situation, the imperatives of evacuation trailers and where to find shelter.

We received so many calls from people who were stranded in trailers that we knew the unmet needs of our community. We transported over 350 people to shelters until late in the...
night, at 1:00 a.m.

After the storm, we saw that several of the homes in the camps from which we evacuated people had been completely destroyed. Radio Consciencia continued to transmit information on where to find food and water and safety measures to take.

When the county realized the importance of Radio Consciencia to the community, they loaned us a generator so that we could continue to communicate these important messages to the community.

As for myself and other farmworkers, I'd like to communicate to the community that I would like to build similar radio stations so that they can communicate to their communities as well.

I'd like to see other radio stations in the north, where a lot of the migrant workers go for the season when they finish their work in Immokalee, and to communities where workers are more isolated and where workers face severe violations of their human rights and the atrocities of -- of their human rights.

But the FCC already gave away most of the frequencies that these communities could use. Those spots are now filled with translator stations, which bring listeners no local contact, but instead, repeat a signal from Twin Falls, Idaho, across the nation.

We are here to ask the Commission to
prioritize new local broadcasters over the
existence of translators and stop silencing
community radio hopefuls waiting years to
broadcast.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much,
Mr. Reyes-Chavez. Thank you very much.

Mr. Templin.

MR. TEMPLIN: I just want to start off my
remarks by recognizing my union brothers in
the back here from IATSE Local 321 that are
making all this rigging and all these lights
and all this sound system work. So I want
everyone to recognize the guys from IATSE.

I am the communications director for the
Florida AFL-CIO. I'm a long-time volunteer in
community radio and how proud to sit in a
global independent media center movement.
The Florida AFL-CIO, we are fire
fighters, teachers, transportation workers,
state employees, construction workers,
health-care professionals, retirees. There's
no part of life in Florida that is not touched
by the people I'm fortunate enough to be able
to represent before you today and ask you to
reject these changes in media-ownership rules.

(Applause.)

We love our members. Because Florida is a
right-to-work state, meaning that not one of
our members have joined our movement as a
condition of their employment. They have
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joined us because they care. They care about their state. They care about people who are less fortunate than they are. They care about building brighter futures for everyone.

They have joined us because they want to be a part of the work we do. They want their legacy to be a stronger, more egalitarian society for future generations.

We are not a special-interests group, unless, of course, you consider special interests, economic justice, quality of public schools, accessible health care for all and an end to unjust wars. (Applause.)

Perhaps the most important thing that our members can do to aid that effort is to add their perspectives to the public discourse, share their stories with the public in an effort to encourage full and open discussions about the problems we face and work cooperatively to solve them.

The best way for them to do this, perhaps the only way for them to do this in a state as big and diverse as Florida, is through the media.

I've been on this job now for over six years. I came out of the academic world, where I researched media issues and was initially shocked at the complete lack of news coverage on working family issues here in Florida. So I helped to institute a program
to train union members in all of our nine central labor councils across the state on to how work with the media again.

I'm really proud of the strides they've made. And I'm really comfortable with the progress that they've made. But, unfortunately, I felt that if I gave them the skills and taught them the processes of news gathering that that would solve the problem. I was naive. And it hasn't.

When I've heard back from our central labor councils and local unions, no matter how hard they try, they've been unable to crack through the blockade standing between them, their local media, and most importantly, the community at large.

Now, the problem is not one of content. It's a lack of access created by a loss of resources for news gathering because it is deemed unprofitable, the loss of local news outlets, the mergers and buyouts, and in some cases, outright bias against the labor movement by pat (sic) corporations who see a vibrant movement of workers as their enemy.

I will briefly illustrate all of these. First, it's been well-documented over the past ten years with media consolidation that it has decimated are critical for the state (sic.)

Forty-four thousand news jobs have been lost in the last five years alone. It's just
simple math. Fewer journalists, fewer resources, mean fewer stories. A reduction at the top is covering a lack of depth for those which are covered.

I work with the Capitol Press Corps in Tallahassee every day. I know these reporters, and I trust them. It's not that they don't care about our issues, that they don't cover it. It's that they don't have the time, and they're under too much pressure from their management to cover the more hot-button issues of the day.

Unfortunately, it's not clear if we had more reporters or more -- (Inaudible) -- if it would make any difference. Because we have lost so many of our local media news outlet.

I encourage any of you to look through Mark's Media Guide, which is a comprehensive guide of all the media in Florida. Each year over the past seven years we've lost local news operation; by my calculations, as much as 30 percent in the last six years.

Now, also, there's a problem with bias. There are three major papers in this state that absolutely refuse to cover labor issues. No matter how -- I won't name them, because I don't want to hurt the work that our local unions are doing in this community.

But they have communicated to me that they simply will not cover labor because either they personally or their managing
corporations are against the labor movement. And these areas are where members have developed relationships with the local TV.

Imagine if you were to pass the cross-ownership rule change. Imagine what would happen to our voices in those communities if these newspapers were to also control one of the few local broadcast news operations.

We're facing great challenges in this country. We're losing millions of jobs to the new global economy. The disparity between the super-wealthy and everyone else is growing at an unprecedented rate. Our health-care system is crumbling. Higher education is once again becoming unaffordable, and we have a war that is disproportionately taking the lives of working people.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Templin.  
MR. TEMPLIN: Thank you.  
MR. SIGALOS: Mr. D'Andrea.  
MR. D'ANDREA: Good evening Chairman Martin and Commissioners Tate and Copps, Adelstein and McDowell. Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you.

My name is Bob D'Andrea. I'm the founder and president of the Christian Television Network with locally-owned commercial stations across the country, including WCLF here in the Tampa Bay Area.
We started broadcasting in Tampa Bay 27 years ago. I am here today representing both CPN and the religious voices in broadcasting, also known as RBB, which is comprised of the nation's largest religious broadcast networks and many small and independent religious broadcasters that are carried on cable as a result of the must-carry provision.

While our group does not have a strong opinion on media ownership, per se, we do encourage the Commission to provide opportunities for independent voices to be participants in the television marketplace.

One such concept is the anti-stripping regulations which are embodied in the 1992 Cable Act ensuring that cable continues to carry each broadcaster's six megahertz TV signals.

Without it, it is the opposite of what the Commission wants to accomplish; and that's the proliferation of programming.

Post transition, there will be a few ultralarge cable companies who carry all of the programming streams of equally large broadcasters. In our area cable has developed its own news 24-7, sports 24-7, Spanish news 24-7, and on-demand of over 300 channels.

This is especially important given that all RBB stations provide the type of family-friendly, children-and-community focused programming that Congress intended to
Cable and media conglomerates produce violence, profane, indecent pornographic programming that has inundated television today that can bring about mass murderers among our youth, from Columbine to Red Lake High, Santana High School to Virginia Tech.

Thus, while ‘a la carte, would allow consumers to deselect channels from their cable coverage in hopes of reducing the costs of cable and addressing indecency, RBB community members feel strongly that most significant initiatives can be passed to address these two is anti-stripping, a basic tenet of American communications policy.

While the FCC looks to expand digital television environment by encouraging independent programmers, such action should not disconnect -- or not discount existing small and independent broadcasters.

To further we erode our standing in digital television, our stations are struggling with the burden of developing digital programming in an uncertain regulatory environment, while simultaneously financing the cost of an unfunded federally-mandated digital buildout, thus antstripping is the foundation to our viability.
We applaud the Commission's recent proposed rulemaking that would require that all cable operators receive our programming, whether they have analogue or digital service. In Tampa Bay alone we spend over three million dollars complying with the federally-required digital buildout and have added about 20,000 per month in ongoing expenses during the three-year transition.

RBB members are not driven by profit but by positive impact we have in our local communities. Small and independent stations with limited resources will not survive a digital transition.

I believe that you all understand the significance of the contributions of our stations and what they make to the communities we serve; therefore, we encourage the Commission to ensure that opportunities will exist for all levels of players in television, including small, independent, religious and minority broadcasters through the affirmation of a multitask antistripping mandate.

In Tampa currently, WCLF is programming three channels with the same six megahertz of spectrum that the cable has always carried. But they are stripping out three channels. Thank very much.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Dr. Dunlap.

DR. DUNLAP: Commissioners, welcome to
Tampa Bay, a great place to discuss media ownership.

Over 30 years ago this area gave birth to a unique form of media ownership. Nelson Poynter, then-owner of the St. Petersburg Times, invested ownership of his newspaper in a school for journalists, student journalists and media leaders.

The Poynter Institute focuses on improving news media, particularly in the practice of values. It follows, then, that while I most hear offer suggestions on media ownership, my comments and recommendations point to news media values.

Underlying the issues of cross-ownership and duopolies, of competition, localism and viewpoint diversity is a concern about public-affairs programming in a democracy.

Now, I'll define public-affairs programs as presentations that help individuals in their role as citizens.

Entertainment is fine, consumer information is useful, but it's essential for media to provide solid news to maintain a democracy.

Think of news as an independent report of facts and opinions on significant issues and events. As you consider media ownership, please consider steps that promote quality news reports.

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In 1927 the nation needed an FCC to serve the public interests by uncluttering the airwaves. Today the nation needs the FCC to serve the public interests by lifting news from the clutter of talk and opinion.

What can the FCC do to encourage independent reports free of the entanglements of business and political opinions?

How can the FCC promote the use of resources to seek out facts?

Talk is cheap. Downie and Kaiser note that programming of arguments and opinions give the impression of covering news while actually giving programs that costs less to produce than does newsgathering.

Quality reporting calls for investment in time, money and training. What can the FCC do to advance explorations of issues and events significant to the lives of citizens?

Reports on celebrity breakups and adoptions draw interest, but that doesn’t nourish a community. It won’t improve our schools, help us understand our environment or tell us about candidates for public office.

The late Carol Kneeland of KVUE-TV Austin, Texas, stressed the importance of local news. So does Paula Madison, President of KNBC-TV Los Angeles, and others.

A quote attributed to the journalist-philosopher Walt Whitman says, “The role of news media is to keep a community in
conversation with itself."

That calls for civil discourse. It calls for all segments of a community involved as participants and conversation, all segments, as a subject of conversation, including their views on the victories and challenges of their communities, and all segments as owners and manager of the means of communications.

For years many states have checked off their public affairs obligations by offering a program featuring a person of color that would broadcast at a time when very few were watching.

We can do better than that. I ask you to consider a community report prior to the periodic licensing of each station. That report shouldn't be cumbersome or costly. It would be a return for a more rigorous assessment.

It would involve a small task force of citizens, a cross-section of the community, led by a leader from outside that community, maybe a journalism professor. A one-day hearing of citizens and station leaders would allow the community to note the strengths and weaknesses in service.

The task force would present a written report to the FCC to raise the level of accountability and public-affairs reporting.

Clearly, one form of media ownership
Many communities suffer under local owners who bleed their stations for profits and promote personal interests. They are large corporations, including chain owners, who provide local communities with outstanding service.

The heroes of Katrina included the Hearst-Argyle chain that moves coverage from WDSU-TV in New Orleans to WESH-TV in Orlando. The Belo Organization sustained WLTV through hurricane recovery.

But there's another side, and it's represented by Nelson Poynter. He believed that organizations served by focusing on its local area. He willed his newspaper to a school to promote journalism education but also to make sure that his newspaper remained independent and locally owned.

He said, "Ownership of a publication of broadcast property is a sacred trust and a great privilege."

As you ponder media ownership, please focus on steps to maintain that important trust. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Bob Gremillion.

MR. GREMILLION: Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. I can provide you with -- I think I'm going to provide you
with a unique perspective for this hearing.

I started my career as a broadcaster in
my native New Orleans at WGNO-TV. At the
time, it was a small independent TV station.
We had no network affiliation, no news
department and very little working capital. I
can tell you firsthand that we were struggling
to survive.

In 1983 Tribune Company bought the
station. And I've been with the company ever
since. I had the opportunity to run WGNO

Today WGNO is an ABC affiliate providing
superior news, public-affairs programming and
community service. It never would've been
able to grow and serve New Orleans without the
support of a committed company like Tribune.

After WGNO I moved to Chicago, where I
was fortunate enough to be involved with
launching ChicagoLand Television News, better
known as CLTV. It was one of the nation's

first 24-hour local cable news channels. It
took years before CLTV made a profit. We
believe CLTV is a very important asset that
enriches the public dialogue in Chicago.

Ten years ago, I moved to the newspaper
side of our business, where I've been the
publisher of the South Florida Sun-Sentinel.
The Sun-Sentinel is based in Fort Lauderdale
and serves Broward County and parts of Palm
Beach County, Florida.

I'm also still involved with the TV side of our business. I oversee the management of WSFL-TV, Tribune's CW-affiliated station in Miami, which we operate by temporary waiver pending the outcome of the Commission's cross-ownership rulemaking.

Having lived in both New Orleans and South Florida, I also have firsthand knowledge and experience as to how the media, broadcast and newspaper, responds to disasters.

Like thousands of New Orleans residents, my mother lost her home in Hurricane Katrina. And, certainly on a much smaller scale, my home in Ft. Lauderdale was damaged by Hurricane Wilma. I also lost my office in Fort Lauderdale for several months following significant damage from Wilma.

In New Orleans WGNO would not have survived the economic fallout from Katrina without the resources of Tribune. The building where WGNO had its studios and where the company had just constructed a brand new newsroom was rendered permanently uninhabitable by the hurricane.

For months there was no advertising revenue, the station's only source of income. The station has operated out of nine temporary facilities since that great storm, producing its newscast first in Baton Rouge and then from double-wide trailers in a parking lot.
yet, Tribune kept everyone on the payroll.

The station is playing an integral role in returning New Orleans to economic health.

We produced and broadcast three candidate debates in last year's important majorial election and four hour-long specials regarding the recovery efforts.

In South Florida, after Wilma, our relationship with WSFL allowed us to share news resources to more effectively serve the community's information needs and to also assist in critical recovery efforts.

These public service efforts would never have happened without the commitment and resources of a large multimedia company like Tribune.

Regularly, a Sun-Sentinel TV reporter and videographer prepare news packages for WSFL's prime-time newscasts, developing stories that in most cases would not be covered on local television otherwise.

These stories have included investigations into questionable crisis grants and counselling programs provided by the federal government in the aftermath of the 2005 hurricane season and a series of feature stories highlighting children in our local schools who demonstrate strong moral character.

While I've personally and professionally
seen and benefitted -- seen and experienced
the benefits provided to our audiences and
communities by cross-ownership in today's
extremely competitive media marketplace, I
understand that cross-ownership raises
questions for those from the FCC and other
concerned citizens here today.

For those of you from Washington and not
familiar with the South Florida area, please
visualize the following. The Sun-Sentinel is
located in Ft. Lauderdale, as I mentioned
earlier, in essentially in the middle of the
South Florida area.

We compete aggressively against two major
newspaper competitors. McClatchy's Miami
Harold is to our south, and Cox Palm Beach
Post is to our north. The Sun-Sentinel is the
leading newspaper in our primary market of
Broward, while the Miami Harold is dominant in
its primary market of Miami-Dade County.

To put it in perspective, the number of
paid subscriptions we have in Miami-Dade
County is less than 800. Our TV station,
WSFL -- the "SFL" stands for South Florida --
is a UHF station, and it competes against VHF
stations owned by Post, Newsweek, Sunbeam,
NBC, CBS, and it competes with monopolies
owned by NBC, CBS and Univision, WSFL's
seventh greatest television station in the
market.
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Gremillion.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Ms. Jenkins.

MS. JENKINS: Good evening, now, to everyone. As president of the Women's Media Center, a nonprofit dedicated to increasing women's voices in the media and as a former TV anchor and reporter in New York City for 30 years, I thank the Commissioners for the opportunity to share some observations.

A pivotal question that now, certainly, requires an answer is: What is media doing to serve nearly 52 percent of its population?

The established inclination that couples the designations "Minority" and "Women" as similar and equal constituencies obscures the fact that women are the majority -- the invisible majority to be sure -- of the "public" that the media must serve.

It makes the statistics we deal with all the more disturbing, if not appalling. Only 5 percent or 67 of the television stations in this country are owned by women. Women of color own less than one half of 1 percent of those TV stations. Those members come from the Free Press study aptly titled "Out of the Picture."

The percentage of women who have a majority stake in radio is a mere 3.4 percent or 483 of more than 11,000, almost 12,000
stations. Those numbers come from a group of top women working in radio. "Mentoring and Inspiring Women" is the name of the group, which against the odds, they actually do.

At the Women's Media Center we refer to another statistic, this one from an Annenberg study that sums up our problem.

In mainstream media we hold about 3 percent of the titles that could be described most effectively as clout positions. Three percent, even here today, is symptomatic, perhaps, of our problem is that only 3 of the 21 panelists presenting today are women. We're glad to be here, though.

The Women's Media Center was founded in 2005, because of what we call a crisis in representation and participation in the media. No matter where you look, it does not look good.

Martha Lauzen of San Diego State tracks the number of women producers, writers, directors and editors working in Hollywood. It declined to 15 percent last year. And we lost three of four women heads of studios, all replaced by men.

Our mission is to make women visible and powerful in the media. And you can join us in this effort at our website, womensmediacenter.com.

We did some research and found that women were largely missing from broadcast radio. In
all but a handful of markets there is no talk radio programming catering to women.

Women -- deregulation made it possible for a company to amass a thousand or more stations with few to none with programming for women. Perhaps one reason for this is the paucity of women in the programming food chain or in the executive positions within radio companies.

Ninety percent of the program directors are men, 85 percent of the general managers to whom they report are men. And going up the chain of the major publicly-traded radio companies collectively owning 2,364 radio stations, 86 percent of their top officers are men, and five of the top-line radio groups did not list any women at all in their executive suites.

Talkers Magazine's Heavy Hundred talk show lists -- those are the big shows -- dated March of 2007, includes 85 male hosts, 15 female hosts.

Talkers' full list of 250 talk show hosts, 86 percent men, 14 percent women. Of the 19 syndicated talk shows that reach audiences of more than 2 and 1/2 million listeners per week, only two women hosts. And that's Dr. Laura and Laura Ingraham, something about the Lauras there.

That's why the Women's Media Center's
first project was to create and spin out a for-profit radio company, GreenStone Media on whose board I serve. And we provide talk programming alternatives for those underserved majority, the underserved majority of the population.

GreenStone produces 12 hours a day of talk programming, Monday through Friday, a three-hour news talk show on the weekends, and is syndicating to stations across the country. It can be heard online at greenstonemedia.com.

It really matters that minorities are the majority of the public women have little to say about what shows up on publicly-owned airwaves.

At a time when women have become supreme court justices, secretaries of state, heads of Fortune 500 companies, presidents of foreign countries, and even a candidate for president in this county, it's puzzling why women can't seem to rise to the top in American media; and more pertinent to the discussion today, why they lag behind so spectacularly in ownership.

No matter what we found out in studies that -- we already know this much. There is some -- there has to be some accountability for the poor showing thus far.

According to Catalyst, women are stagnating or losing ground in mainstream media corporations. There are only 14.7 percent of directors or boards, and one major
Mr. Lee.

MR. LEE: Good evening Commissioners, and thanks for this opportunity to be here today. As we were driving over, my wife and I -- we're from the east coast of Florida, what is called the Treasure Coast, Indian River, Martin and St. Lucie Counties.

I am part owner of WFLM, WIRA. My wife and a group of community people were very concerned about what's happening on radio today. About 13 years ago we decided -- we had careers, we were very comfortable with what we were doing -- but we decided that we wanted to make an impact in our community.

And we were very dissatisfied with a lot of the garbage that was being put on the airwaves. We were very concerned with the lack of the big stations being really involved in our community. So we decided to do something about it.

We organized ourselves, and we got a group of investors who believed in the same values, believed in what we believed in, and we created our first radio station, WFLM. And later we purchased WIRA, about three years ago.
Now, I'd like to say to Commission Copps when he started out today, I tell you, driving over here, I said, "This is like going up against -- David going up against Goliath."

When you look at Clear Channel and these big -- I'm going to make some points in a few seconds to drive home my point. You become very discouraged every day when your salespeople come in at the end of the day, and they're throwing the towel in, but they can't compete.

And what -- what's happening out here -- and you really need to become aware of -- but I want to give you two examples, because what you did today -- I'm a former football player -- and it reminds me, as I was sitting there looking -- listening to your comments -- when we were getting ready to go to Dallas some days or some evenings where the opposing teams are, our coach would call us in the corner (sic), and even though the Goliath was bigger than we were, and many times they were faster, they gave us that little push that we needed.

And I want to thank you for giving me an extra push today. Because we're not going to give up this fight. But I want to tell you about two incidents that happened recently with Clear Channel.

Our county decided that they were going to spend $100,000 on solid-waste recycling.
They wanted to get out to the public the importance of recycling plastics and newspapers. So what happened? We didn't get the buyer.

So I asked -- we didn't get any of the buyers. So I called the county commissioner and asked him, you know, "What is this?"

He said, "Well, Clear Channel outbid you."

I said, "That should not even be up for bid in the first place, because Clear Channel can outbid anyone."

So what happened was, I said, "Now, you need to go back to your Commissioners, because I'm going to be coming before them, and I'm going to put this out in the public's view."

He -- "Well, wait, let -- let me check into this."

So he goes back, and he finds out they have this policy, which because of me speaking up they are now changing their policy. But what they did, they gave Clear Channel all the money.

My friend Greg White, who owns WTLS -- he's out in the audience -- he has the one and only Hispanic station in the market. No one else can reach that market but him.

We have the Number 1 and Number 2 stations that reach African Americans. Clear Channel blew, went in there, snowed those guys...
and -- and sometimes this stuff is, basically, connections.

The low people don't have the connections that Clear Channel and these big companies have to get into some of these -- these media buyers and even compete. So they just establish the relationships.

And what ended up happening was, he ignored the Hispanic community and the African-American community. And my question was, "Wouldn't you want everyone to recycle?"

And, of course, you know, so, by not advertising on Hispanic or the African-Americans, you're going to ignore those communities.

Next point, real quick. Longwood Medical Center, Clear Channel goes in with them. I go with one of our salespeople to ask who's the advertiser. "Why are you not advertising on our radio station. Thirteen years we've been in the market, struggling."

"Well, we use Clear Channel."

"But Clear Channel can't reach the Hispanic and the African-American community."

"Well, we use Clear Channel."

Fortunately, I knew the CEO at the hospital. And, finally, we did get some buyers there.

Well, all I'm saying is this level of playing field -- because these people, when they come out there and they talk about what
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these big companies are doing, yeah, sometimes
they will come in and they send a few people
out into the community, do a few
public-interest things, make themselves look
good, but, basically -- I'm with Steve
Erlanger, who spoke earlier -- sooner or
later, when people like me are no more, then
the community will realize what we have.

And we have, finally, one other program
that we do for people over 70, where we give
away money. Every Friday we do good news --
well, let me -- I didn't realize five minutes
would go by so fast. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Mr. Lopez.

MR. LOPEZ: Thank you. Welcome to Tampa,
Distinguished Commissioners.

My name is Luis Lopez. I'm the public
relations director for the Hispanic Alliance
of Tampa Bay. The Hispanic Alliance of Tampa
Bay is a nonprofit umbrella organization that
represents 48 nonprofit organizations here in
the Tampa Bay Area. I thank you for allowing
us to present our position.

Let me start by saying when the
Telecommunications Act of 1996 lifted
ownership limits for radio stations, leading
to incredible consolidation of radio station
and other media ownership, these changed their
original purpose from information, education, communication, entertainment and community services, that changed to sales, margins exclusivities, takeovers and profits.

It is our belief that these media outlets do not exist to promote the public interest. They exist to make profits. And we agree that, like any other business, there should be profits.

But before profits, media companies are supposed to provide information. This information should be diverse, competitive, independent and with a local flavor.

It should address the lives and needs of the communities they agreed to serve when they received a license by the Commission to use our airwaves, the airwaves that belong to all of the public of this great nation.

(Applause.)

These media outlets all have a huge public file with the many activities they do to serve the local community. Let me bring to your attention some of these so-called public services.

For example, a media outlet decides that they will sponsor an event for a nonprofit organization, when in reality some of these outlets will actually buy out an organization for a so-called donation that, in fact, is tied to an exclusive contract that virtually
locks out any other media outlet that wishes to participate, especially the smaller independent operators.

Is this something that this commission considers as a public service or a very well planned marketing scheme with the only purpose of obtaining market share?

We believe that the latter is the correct answer. The weakness of some organizations when confronted with sums of money that they probably won’t be able to raise in a short amount of time is being used for the purpose of marketing. Distinguished Commissioners, that is not public service.

Another example, a media outlet offers to help you out promoting an event with your organization. You visit their studios to record a promotional piece or you send them a ready-to-air promotion thanking them for their help and avoiding them the work of having to produce a piece for the organization.

You ask them one simple question, and the questions is, "By the way, when is this little one-minute piece going to air?"

And the answer is, "Oh, yes. That will be aired Sunday morning at 7:00 a.m. or sometime during the a.m. hours," meaning between midnight and 5:00 a.m.

Again, is this something that the Commission considers a public service or just
a way of getting around the public-file issue?

Again, Distinguished Commissioners, that is not public service.

If an independent media outlet wants to bid for national advertising, they don't have a chance against these huge conglomerates. There are already independent operations that have had to close, because they just cannot compete.

And let's not forget minority ownership. All the minorities continue to be under-represented in our communities. Please don't forget that more than one third of the population of this nation belongs to a minority group.

Big companies only serve certain minorities that will guarantee them profits.

If we continue to move in this direction, all information will be under siege by these huge groups, as we are starting to see. All independent media will eventually disappear. And minorities will not be able to move ahead.

The local flavor, the local information, the needs of the community and the services that we, as citizens of this country expect from our media, will disappear. Again, Distinguished Commissioners, that is not public service.

In conclusion, we kindly ask the Commission to avoid this disaster and to fulfill its place in history, in the history
of this nation, as the Commission that brought back information, education and public service to the airwaves. The Commission that decided to enhance the original principles of the public interest and fight against the profits of others that, in all ways, are disrespecting not only the communities it's supposed to serve but also you as commissioners. Don't let this happen, for the sake of all the informed people in this great nation. An informed person is a better neighbor.

Don't let that information been controlled by a few.

Again, Distinguished Commissioners, this is the only way we will have real public services for all our communities.

MR. SIGALOS: I thank you.

(Ms. Rodriguez.)

MS. RODRIGUEZ: Chairman Martin and Commissioners, thank you for holding this important discussion today.

My name is Carlina Rodriguez. I am the national director of Spanish Language Organizing for the Screen Actors Guild based out of our Miami office.

I'm here today representing approximately 120,000 performers nationwide, who are the actors, singers, dancers, stunt performers, puppeteers and voice performers who appear in...
feature films, television commercials, television shows and other new media platforms. We are also a proud member of the AFL-CIO.

According to a 2003 Census Bureau Report, Hispanics now constitute America's largest minority, numbering in excess of 40 million people. According to recent estimates, the total number of Hispanic television households will grow 160 percent, to more than 31 million homes by the year 2050.

It is forecasted that the number of Hispanic persons in television households will climb 136 percent, to 94.4 million, over the next 43 years.

These numbers would seem to suggest that creating successful English-language content for Latinos would be imperative. In actuality, however, such content is sorely lacking on broadcast network television, especially during prime time.

While some efforts are underway to produce television programming directed at Hispanics nationwide, there are only a handful of examples that address this growing demographic.

Most notable are a telenovela-inspired show, Ugly Betty, which ranked among the 20 top 20 shows in the 18-to-49 age group, or the George Lopez Show.

Thus, despite representing 13 percent of
the nation's population, Hispanics are woefully under-represented on the networks' prime time broadcast schedules. Of course, bilingual Hispanics can always tune into Spanish-language programming on Telemundo or Univision; however, there exists precious little in the way of English-language options for programming that depicts American life in America today.

This lack of Hispanic programming harms not only Latinos but non-Latinos as well and does incalculable damage to our overall national cultural dialogue, by essentially ignoring a vibrant flourishing sector of America's population.

In past years, breakthrough programming, like All in the Family, Chico and the Man, Good Times, The Jeffersons and The Cosby Show, introduced African-Americans, Latinos and all of Americans -- Americans -- to some of the most well-loved and unforgettable characters in the history of television.

These shows not only made us laugh and cry, they also helped to open up a dialogue of understanding and empathy between different segments of America's society. Importantly, these shows were all independently produced. They were not produced by the networks that aired them.
In today’s era of unparalleled vertical integration, these groundbreaking shows would likely never see the light of the day. How many similar shows are not being broadcast because the networks are not willing to develop or air them?

Against this backdrop, Screen Actors Guild as the representative for thousands of Latino performers, urges you to help secure a marketplace wherein programming exists that is more relevant to and more reflective of our lives.

Specifically, I appear before you today to ask that the FCC adopt the proposal to set a new standard that a minimum 25 percent of the networks' prime-time schedules be filled with programming made and owned by independent producers. (Applause.)

These recommendations have been previously submitted to the Commission by the Coalition for Program Diversity, of which Screen Actors Guild is a member of.

As we can see by the programming currently available on our airwaves, the days of an independent producer making his or her creative vision a TV production is a thing of the past.

A decade ago, 67 percent of prime-time television programs -- programming -- aired by the four networks was produced by independent producers. Today, only 25 percent of the
Broadcast networks' prime-time programming is obtained from independent producers; and most of that content is reality-based programming. Big media companies create almost every show and cast almost every actor, because they can. They own most of the product. They make decisions based on their own cultural experiences and expectations of revenue, not always on the needs of the community, specifically, underserved and under-represented community.

Unfortunately, there exists no independent program sources to counterbalance a networks' power. So what is wrong with the four networks producing and owning the vast majority of the prime-time, over-the-air programming?

After the financial syndication rules were allowed to lapse in 1993, the networks said that they would not favor in-house developed and produced product in their programming choices.

But, of course, that is exactly what has happened. The FCC study titled "Program Diversity and the Program Selection Process on Broadcast Netcast Television" --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

Mr. Rosenwasser.

MR. ROSENWASSER: Good evening and,
Commissioners, welcome to Tampa Bay.

My name is Sam Rosenwasser, and I'm the president and general manager of WTSP Channel 10, WTSP-HD on Channel 24, 10 Weather Now on Channel 24.2, tampabays10.com, Studio 10.TV, 10weathernow.com and two more websites coming in the next 30 days.

We offer local consumers many different places to go to for local news, information and entertainment. Choice. Consumers have more choices for news and information than ever before.

We recognize that in our on-demand society, people want their news and entertainment on their time table, not ours. So we've expanded on to new platforms that enable us to be a 24-7 resource for them providing many different resources and services to our local consumers.

I sit before tonight, as a broadcaster, very proud of the local product we produce every day. With each weekday we provide four and a half hours of live local news and information. In addition, we produce a local hour-long program each weekday that gives local nonprofit agencies a forum to talk about what they're doing to benefit the public.

I also sit before you tonight as a broadcaster who, in view of the massive explosion of information sources available to consumers, is very concerned about local
broadcasters' future.

The media landscape has changed dramatically since 1975, when the newspaper broadcast crossed-ownership rules were put in place. I won't argue about whether these actions in 1975 were warranted. But I can tell you that in 1975 no one in Tampa Bay was watching CNN, the Weather Channel, logging on to the Internet or watching 24-7 local cable news channels. They couldn't. Because they different exist.

Competition in today's media environment is intense. And I don't see that changing. Every day in Tampa Bay, we compete with 12 full-time television stations, dozens of radio stations, 11 daily newspapers in our DMA, two full-time cable local news channels and millions of websites. That's right, "Millions."

In fact, if you type in "Tampa Bay" in Google you will find almost 20 million search results. Even my network partner, CBS, has announced they'll utilize other websites to run their prime-time programming before they air on my station. All this means is that the pie is getting split up into smaller and smaller pieces.

Today, the lines that used to define television, newspaper and radio are blurring
very quickly. Television reporters are writing for websites and producing expanded versions of stories seen on their newscasts. Newspaper reporters are shooting and editing video for their websites. And radio station websites offer news and information as well.

Each day I compete with Media General, which owns WFLA-TV, the Tampa Tribune and TBO.com. Has this newspaper-TV combination kept us from competing successfully in this market? Absolutely not.

In the most recent rating period, we held the number one position in adults 25-54, women 25-54 and women 18-49 for the 11 o'clock news time period. But I can appreciate the opportunity that Media General has to provide local viewers and readers extended coverage from different angles.

In addition, common ownership works extremely well in Phoenix, Arizona, where my company, Gannett, operates KPNX and owns the Arizona Republic. That joint ownership creates enhanced products for the local consumer, and the citizens of Phoenix benefit from that fact.

At the same time the editorial independence of each of these properties is maintained. And this has been documented in comments filed with the Commission. The concern that two commonly-owned properties would present the exact same position just
isn't realistic and goes against journalistic ethics and sound business judgment.

Newspapers and Television are so different. For one thing, newspapers have the luxury of space. I once heard that if you took every word spoken in an average television newscast, it wouldn't fill one column in a newspaper. On the other hand, television is a media. And websites have the ability to combine the best of newspapers and television.

Local news and information products represent significant investments to a local community. For broadcasters to continue to successfully operate in today's highly competitive media environment, we must look for opportunities to maximize our efforts to attract viewers and web users.

As is true in Phoenix and here in Tampa Bay, permitting joint ownership of television operations and a newspaper --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. ROSENWASSER: -- will make it possible to better serve local consumers with more local information. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Rosenwasser.

Dr. Glenn Cherry.

DR. CHERRY: Good evening Commissioners. My name is Dr. Glenn W. Cherry, and I'm president and CEO of Tama Broadcasting, Inc.
For 19 years my family has owned radio stations in the state of Florida. We are the largest African-American radio broadcaster in the state. In many ways my story's similar to that of other African-American owners and former owners.

Most African-American broadcasters got into station ownership to serve their local community. They wanted to provide a distinct, compassionate and caring voice and to help solve community problems and provide the type of positive programming that our community could be proud of.

Upon entering the radio business, most African-American broadcasters serving predominantly African-American audiences soon learned that some advertisers would not advertise on our stations at all and that others would vastly discounted the value of African-American consumers. We call that the "Black Tax."

And at any time after we moved into an ownership position to look at the "Black Tax," we paid higher cost for our stations, the cost of capital was higher for us, and the return on our investment from what services that we rendered were less than the general market.

The 1996 Telecommunication Act allowed unprecedented consolidation in the industry, changing the ownership landscape to the detriment of minority and small broadcasters.
and new entrants.

After many discussions with other broadcasters, my family decided that we would have to grow or sell our three AM stations at the time. And so we tried to find capital investment in the state of Florida.

Unable to attract capital, we moved to New York, where we found a black-venture capital firm and a lender who no longer lends on such small deals (sic), and we purchased eight FM stations between 2001 and 2004.

Unfortunately, since this was after 9/11, the terrorists attacked, and the maturing consolidation of the broadcast industry and the economic instability of the post 9/11 environment made it extremely difficult for African-American small broadcasters to compete in the marketplace.

In a down economy, we struggle to effectively compete against larger companies that were consolidated. It almost took ten years before we got started. They are ruthless in their pursuit of total domination of the advertising revenues in our market and will engage in unethical and illegal anticompetitive behavior if necessary.

At the same time, local communities are seeking more public service, especially local nonprofits. As small broadcasters we are closer to the community than larger
correspondence and, thus, we see more grassroots initiatives. We are called on to provide a disproportionate amount of local public service from the community.

Ownership of radio stations by small broadcasters are a labor of love. We are a training ground for many minorities. And we have two women general market managers during a time when the industry has not promoted women in great numbers to upper management.

You—all know the ownership numbers of African-Americans in this country is less than 2 percent. The Telecommunications Act of 1996 directly caused this loss of diversity of ownership. As a result, many small owners found themselves unable to compete and sold their stations to larger competitors instead of risk going out of business.

By owning only eleven stations, Tama is one of the largest Black-owned radio groups in the country. This is not an achievement in which the radio industry should be proud. The loss of minority owners robs the American public of the diversity of broadcast voices.

The Commission, Congress and the Courts have historically recognized that it's essential to protect the First Amendment rights of all Americans.

We support the recommendations by the National Association of Black-Owned
Broadcasters, which you—all have in your hands, as well as the recommendations of the Minority Media Telecommunications Council.

The promotion of the First Amendment rights of listeners and viewers to receive a multiplicity of often conflicting viewpoints from a diversity of sources is the Commission's principal obligation in its regulation of the public airwaves; and to this end it must promote these interests and give paramount consideration to that balance.

Because of the serious under-representation of minorities and the ownership of broadcast stations and increasing minority population numbers, the Commission can best promote its First Amendment obligation by making promotion for minority ownership of broadcast facilities its primary objective in the media-ownership proceedings.

I have personally experienced many opportunities where Commission rules and regulations have been manipulated by large broadcasters to keep us from improving our signals in the marketplaces. And there should be some attention paid to that and what abilities that the Commission has to enact restraints on these large corporations when it comes to their technical abilities. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Cherry.
And, audience, will you please join me in thanking all of our panelists this evening for their participation. Thank you very much.

All right. Now, as we can transition to the second and final public-comment period. I need to first recognize the following individuals who asked to speak for two minutes, at this point, this evening.

At this time would Dick Greco, former Tampa mayor, please come forward.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Dick Greco?

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: How about Kim Scheeler, Tampa Chamber of Commerce President and CEO.

Mr. Scheeler.

MR. SCHEELER: Yes. Thank you.

Good evening Commissioners. A couple of quick points I'd like to make about some of the benefits the community receives from the convergence of Media General companies here. I ran the United Way for six years here before moving over to the Chamber. And I can tell you as a head of a charity, it was a great benefit to have one source that you could go to and receive public service coverage in three different outlets within the community and less time, less money spent trying to get exposure out there for our organization. It was a great benefit for the charities in the community.
The other is the shared resources that these outlets can utilize. From a business perspective that's -- that means that, for example, we can have a business reporter from the Tribune on WFLA providing coverage about business events and business happenings in the community that normally wouldn't happen, because the TV station wouldn't be able to have that resource available to them.

So we see that as a great benefit for the community. We appreciate that. And we think that we have better news coverage, more effective news coverage and more in-depth news coverage as a result of that.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Scheeler.

Okay. It's time to continue with public comments. Before the break we heard from approximately 45 people. We're starting with Number 46.

I would like to, again, urge everybody, if they could just try to make sure they incorporate those things that they want said within our two-minute period. It would make it much quicker for us to get through everybody without me having to interject.

A VOICE: Dick Greco is here.

MR. SIGALOS: Dick Greco is here.

MR. GRECO: It's taken me this long to get from the back to the front. I'm not used to this.
Commissioners, thank you very much for taking your time to do this. I was sitting here thinking how wonderful it is to see all the wonderful people passionate about anything (Applause.)

Regardless of what point of view, I think that the -- as stated tonight that you will take something home with you. I must say that the Tampa newspaper and the channel that we're talking about mostly tonight has been part of my life since I was a little boy.

I started watching all the television stations here at their inception when they first started. For the most part, they do a good job. I don't always agree with all their points of view, but that's life in the big city today.

But I will say that newspapers and television and radio and all the media has a big, big responsibility today. It's the only way we can make up our minds, many times, about everything that goes on. And just a smattering won't do it. These people here probably read and listen to everything. But others simply don't care.

I would love to see all of the media recognize the importance that they play. I've seen some people who hate people in public life.

You say, "You know them? You ever met them?"
It happens today because of maybe some story or -- it seems like many of them are competing with each other and trying to do something that will get people's attention as opposed to -- exactly what's going on.

I have no quarrel with any of the papers or any of the television stations. I think, by and large, they do a good job. Many of the stations have kept people for many years that’ve worked there, they’ve become part of your family. You listen to them.

It's terribly, terribly important today, the media. I've talked to many young reporters and said to them, "What you're saying about me, about others, about people in general is very meaningful, and I hope that you take it very seriously."

So I know you people are taking your job very seriously. What you've gathered here tonight, maybe take a little bit or all of it together and come up with really benefit -- (Inaudible) -- around the world. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Joe Illingworth, Gavin Baker, Rob Lorei, Nancy Greenlees, Joseph Floyd, Richard Sparrow, please head to the nearest microphone.

Mr. Illingworth.
MR. ILLINGWORTH: My name is Joe Illingworth. I am a resident of Largo and an executive director of absolutely nothing. But I'd to point out that my speech is not been computer-printed, it's not double-spaced, it was not prepared by a PR department, and it has not been reviewed by six corporate attorneys so that I can present it tonight.

(Laughter and Applause.)

I am a citizen of the earth, like all of you. I would like to point out that media is not just about free speech and free democracy and fair competition, it's much more important than that, it's much, much bigger than that.

Media ownership and diversity is not how our society organizes itself, about how it orders itself; it's about how our society controls itself or is controlled by someone.

The same technology that allows consolidation of media also allows us and manufacturers and corporation to produce enormous amounts of stuff very cheaply, 24 color pens for a buck.

The same technology doesn't quite make as many colored plasma TVs as we would like, but it has the capability of covering the earth not with plastic-like products, but CO2 and other global gases that create a greenhouse effect and cause global warming.

Right now we have a very hot spot right there in a little country called Iraq. Right
now we are starting to have a very diverse and vivid debate in our county about why we are there and what it's all about. That debate's four years too late. (Applause).

It's cost 100,000 lives and hundred of -- billions of dollars. The same debate needs to happen about global warming. For 10 or 15 years we've been denying -- (Inaudible) -- scientists -- the media that they need to reach a mass audience.

We need to talk about diversity of media and how it's presented. We need massively --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: -- cooperation and collaboration across the globe to have this happen. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

MR. ILLINGWORTH: -- later to give that to the Commissioners (Inaudible.) That's very fragile. The world's in their hands.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Gavin Baker.

MR. BAKER: Good evening Commissioners.

My name is Gavin Baker. I'm a student at the University of Florida. And I'd like to thank the Commission for organizing this hearing. Clearly, I appreciate this opportunity, because I drove two hours from Gainesville to be here.
I urge the Commission not to loosen its media-ownership rules. All you've heard from a number of speakers is on the sad state of the public interest in commercial broadcasting today.

Myself, I don't even listen. As a young person who wants to be connected with my local community, there's nothing for me on commercial TV and radio. And so it goes for most of my friends. I find that problematic. Now, if media are just a commodity in the market, then it's not troubling if I choose not to buy. But media is so much more. The media play an integral role in the community, in self-expression, communication among neighbors, not just a market, but a marketplace of ideas, a gathering place for exploring our shared identity.

The spectrum is not the square footage at the shopping mall. It's a precious natural resource that the public owns. It belongs to us. But if the broadcast spectrum were a national park, the park would be fenced off 20-feet high with barbed wire on the top. We own it, but we can't use it. You can look inside, but don't go in. You can consume it, but you can't produce it. That's why myself and much of my generation have -- (Inaudible) -- the broadcast media. But me (sic) and I are not
content to be excluded, to be consigned to the new media because the old media has abandoned us. We want it back.

The commission can help us by rejecting rules that will mean more of the same -- or, really, worse than the same -- and put us on the track to more localism, more diversity and a media that serves more than its market, a media that serves its community. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Rob Lorei.

MR. LOREI: Good evening Commissioners.

Thank you for coming. Great to see you.

I'm Rob Lorei, one of the founders of WMNF Radio, the community radio station in Tampa. (Applause.) I just want to give you a quick glimpse of what's happened since we started the radio station.

When we started reporting, back in the early 1980s, there were seven or eight radio stations competing with us at that time. Now, reliably, there are only three. Something has happened in that time period to give us less local reporting. And I think it is those media-ownership rules that you've enacted and loosened up.

In the time that we -- in the 1980s up to the early 1990s, though, we had plenty -- plentiful number of talk stations and radio stations. I've got a friend who works for a commercial radio station in town. He was one
of the last local commercial radio talk show hosts at the Clear Channel station in town.

He was fired recently. The reason was -- Clear Channel said -- that it couldn't afford the $3,500 a year to keep his two-hour-a-week talk shows on the radio. Clear Channel has plenty of money. And right now Clear Channel has replaced most of its local talent with nationally syndicated programs.

We're well-served if you're conservative. And we're hardly served if you're a liberal or a person of color. I'm sorry I'm rushing. I'm going through this so fast, the -- there is a -- on any given night on television stations, the big four commercial television stations, we get eight minutes of local news. On any given night, if your watching is down (sic), it is a rehash of crime stories.

We rarely get city council meetings, county commission meetings, neighborhood controversies -- (Applause) -- civil rights and peace groups and other activist groups are kept out. (Applause.)

For an outsider coming to town watching local television the news, it would be easy to conclude that we are living in an area populated by murderers, car thieves and convenience-store robbers, home invaders and pit-bull owners that let their dogs run amok.

The media has failed us in this city. Please
do something about it. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Nancy Greenlees.

MS. GREENLEES: Hello. My name is Nancy Greenlees. I want to speak against media consolidation. I speak simply as a concerned citizen.

I'm fortunate to live in Tampa, where I can listen to community radio station WMNF and read the independently-owned St. Petersburg Times. I want to speak on behalf of my family, who don't live in Tampa and couldn't be here tonight.

My family lives in a city of just one -- just under 100,000 residents. Most of the media is owned by Clear Channel and other large corporations. There is one commercial radio station, however, that is owned and operated by a small local company.

My brother is currently serving as a city commissioner. And he knows that an informed, engaged citizenry is important to good government and community life. Many of his constituents lack easy access to the Internet or don't have a subscription to the newspapers.

The locally-owned station is the only one in town that gives them daily free and convenient access to information about local government and school and police concerns, public safety issues, community events and
also gives them an opportunity to call in to the locally-produced public-affairs program every weekday to express their concerns and opinions.

We know that a lot of people choose this programming over the nationally-produced talk shows from the other media in town. Because when my brother attends community meetings or speaks to individual citizens after his occasional visits to the radio station to discuss city council issues on the air, he meets many people who say, "I heard you on the radio."

We are concerned that if further consolidation of media ownership is allowed, this station will be sold to one of the media giants and will no longer have this vital local programming. Please don't let this happen. Please, at the very least, maintain the current-ownership limits (sic.) Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

(Applause.)

Joseph Floyd.

MR. FLOYD: My name is Joseph Floyd, and I'm from Gainesville, Florida.

A lot of the large companies in the government that control the information in the general population here is not diversifying our media. I've come down here to ask you, the five board members to represent the
people's interests when it comes to allowing companies like CBS Corp., Clear Channel and News Corp., who continue to throw a mask over our communication resources.

I don't watch, listen to and read the news to be entertained. I watch, listen to and read the news to learn about what's going on in my community and globally.

I feel that these companies are trying to dictate what is popular rather than encouraging different points of view. And, most importantly, I'm terrified that the FCC Board, as a whole, has not done more to hold these companies accountable for cheating the system.

We all know that fining a company like Clear Channel three-and-a-half million dollars for payola is nearly useless. It's a slap on the wrist to the companies and a slap in the face to artists, musicians, journalists and people around the world.

You all, as the FCC, are supposed to be protecting us, the people, from corporate brainwashing and manipulation.

I grew up watching television for multiple hours a day. But for the last three to four years I felt as if I was getting less intelligent for every second I've listened to corporate media. (Applause.)

Thankfully -- thankfully -- now I get the...
majority of my information from reading online, which at least for now is a much more diverse place to get information.

I realize that companies have to advertise to make money to keep their business afloat. But allowing these media companies to subliminally push products to people is simply wrong. We, the people, need information from large varieties of sources so we can draw our own conclusions as to what is going on in our community and around the world.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. FLOYD: Do your job.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Greg Lendwirth, Clay Colson, Lillian Dunlap, Leonard Coolidge, Nathan Gove, Arlene Engelhardt, please go to the nearest microphones.

Richard Sparrow.

MR. SPARROW: Good evening. Thank you for bringing this FCC hearing to Tampa Bay. My name is Richard Sparrow. I am a member of the American Federation of Musicians and a delegate for the West Central Florida Federation of Labor, a nonprofit organization.

We held a Labor Day celebration at the Florida State Fair grounds and invited the public to attend for free. Since the day after Labor Day 2006, with the primary election in Florida, we also invited many
politicians to come to the event and spend
time with the public. And with help from the
Music Performers Trust Fund, we were able to
provide live music for our event.

I volunteered to be on the media
committee. And I want to share some of the
issues we had with our local commercial media.
We sent faxes and E-mails to several local
newspapers, radio and television stations
detailing our event to news department and
asked them to be included in the calendar of
events published for the general public.

Because of the free nature of this event,
we thought it would be easy to get
public-service announcements -- announcements
from the commercial local media. It turned
out that all the air time for Labor Day
Weekend was being held because -- you're right
-- the candidates and the local parties were
buying all of it.

I can only assume, now, that the stations
couldn't pass up an opportunity to make some
more money off of our election process.

After we discovered that we were being

shut out for public-service announcements, we
found some more money to use to purchase some
air time. We inquired of several local
commercial radio stations, and they gave us
options to buy packages that started in the
several-thousand dollar range.
After further inquiry, we discovered that it would indeed be impossible for us to buy what we needed. We did spend our money on advertising locally, in the newspapers, a couple of weekends. And we relied on community calendars to announce our event.

I don’t believe that we were served well by our commercial TV and radio. Fortunately for us, there was WMNF Community Radio. (Applause.) They held a live on-air event discussion Friday before Labor Day, and we were allowed to attend. Thank you very much.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Greg Landwirth.

(No audible response.)

Greg Landwirth.

(No audible response.)

Clay Colson.

MR. COLSON: Greetings. My name is Clay Colson. I’m a native Floridian, one of the endangered species.

I’d like to think I speak for “We the People,” when I tell you, the FCC, what your job is. It is to serve the public interests. Media consolidation is not in the public interest. Media consolidation is dangerous to our democratic republic.

A working democracy requires independent, unbiased factual reporting of the news. To function properly, a well-informed public is
tantamount to our democratic republic. This
cannot happen with further media
consolidation.
I offer as evidence the lead-up to the
illegal, immoral invasion and occupation of
Iraq, as the corporately consolidated and
controlled media acted as cheerleaders for the
administration, beating the drums of war.
(Applause.)
Further evidence is the Downing Street
minutes, front-page news around the world,
even in Canada and Mexico, but virtually
unreported by our corporately consolidated and
controlled media.
Then, still, are the stolen presidential
elections of 2000 and 2004. Again, front-page
news worldwide. There was proper, in-depth
investigation done by grand (sic) powers of
the BBC of the mechanisms and deception and
how it happened. Yet, virtually, no coverage
in this country.
But if you want the best evidence of how
we, the people, have failed -- especially
locally -- just go back to your hotel, turn on
your TV and watch how the local standard
broadcast stations covered this event. And
don't forget to pick up the two major papers
on your way out of town. They'll speak
volumes.
No media consolidation. Thank you.
MR. SIGALOS: Lillian Dunlap.

MS. DUNLAP: Hello. Thank you for bringing this meeting here. My name is Lillian Dunlap. I am a journalist, a former professor of journalism, and also currently a media consultant.

And, actually, my comments are about access. And, first of all, I would say that when we don't have diversity of voices in the news, we just don't fail to include a voice, we actually fail to accurately tell our story.

And, in fact, we don't -- we don't even have a story to tell, because it's filled with holes. And I'm concerned about that, as we lead up to 2009 in our move from analogue to digital.

So by 2009 television stations, for example, will have potentially six channels instead of just one. Right. Some will use traditional programming. But there could be as many as four left. And I'm concerned about those four and those being available for minority groups or for small businesses, and so forth.

So my comment is -- and this is what I would like for the Commissioners to do. I've read of that -- this discussion among the Commissioners, about allowing minority groups to lease digital channels or to somehow -- somehow participate in having a digital
channel. And that sounds like a very good idea to me. And I'd like to encourage you to continue to talk about that. And keep us in the loop, if you will, in the loop about how the discussions are going, when such channels might be available and how, at long last, we might really make ourselves eligible for that kind of participation with digital-channel distribution. Thanks.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Leonard Coolidge.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Nathan Gove.

MR. GOVE: Hello. I'm a doctorate student in the field of science studies. And I want to talk about studies which address whether media consolidation serves public interests.

We can't trust conclusions just because they have the term "Scientific" stamped on them; who's doing the research, what is being measured and how.

There's research by the likes of Media General who say that consolidation creates a healthier media. Then there's research by the likes of Free Press and by the Consumer Union, which publishes consumer reports. Their studies conclude that consolidation is against public interests.
I don't know about you, but if I'm evaluating a product, I would trust Consumer Reports more than the product's seller. But let's be fair and look at an example of the research.

Media General said that a TV station in a cross-ownership community has more hours of nonentertainment programming. But they weren't looking at news or local content. And they failed to note that in the noncross-ownership markets, a higher number of stations carried the news. Taking this into account, noncross-ownership communities have 10 to 25 percent more news.

What about the FCC's own research? In 2002 the FCC commissioned studies, which received the 200-page rebuttal from watchdogs. And in 2004 the Courts ruled that the FCC studies were insufficient. I don't know all the reasons why. I am disappointed to hear that the FCC apparently buried a study which demonstrated the benefits of local ownership.

I do know that the FCC did one good piece of research. They opened their mailbox. In 2003, 3 million Americans weighed in with the FCC about lifting caps on media ownership; 98 percent were against it.

Now, it's not the same as a random survey, but it still is solid evidence that Americans were strongly concerned about this
and those who cared enough to write in were overwhelmingly opposed to further media consolidation.

In fact, with this evidence, something seems clear. If you still say that relaxed media-ownership rules is in the public interest, then you are saying that Americans don't know what's good for them.

And thanks for coming.

Mr. Sigalos: Thank you.

Will Fred Sowder, Tom Krumreich, Mary Schoonover, Neil Cosentino, Elly Wencka, Norma Bostock, please go to the nearest mike, and Arlene Engelhardt.

Ms. Engelhardt: First of all, I want to say thank you for being here and thank you for listening to Tampa Bay. We really do appreciate it.

I serve as co-host of a show that represents the under-represented majority of the women in this community, the Women's Show, on WMNF, our community radio station (Applause.) And I also serve on the advisory board of the Women's Studies Department at USF.

As such, I urge you to remember the needs of women and minorities as you're considering what is best for media in this country and to look at the statistics that were brought up by Carol Jenkins, President of the Women's Media...
Center, and carefully look at those statistics and what happens, with consolidation of media, to women and minorities.

Freedom of speech is the most important right of people in a democracy. It separates us from totalitarianism and tyranny. Media consolidation threatens localism, diversity and media competition, as well as the strength of our very democracy.

If our media are owned by a distant corporation, we can forget about local news and information. Yes, there will be a little bit of it there, but it'll be the accidents and the glamour stories and not those things that are of real concern to the real people of the community.

As Lowry Mays, CEO of Clear Channel said, "We're not in the business of providing news and information. We're simply in the business of selling our customers' products."

It is exceedingly important that we have access to a wide diversity of media, a wide range of voice locally, nationally and globally.

I urge you to consider that, as you move forward with your deliberations as to what the new rules should be, and to consider the importance of diversity in local media. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Fred Sowder.
MR. SOWDER: Thank you very much Commissioners, Chairman Martin, for this opportunity for public comment. My name is Fred Sowder. I'm a graduate student at the University of Florida in Gainesville.

I've spent over a dozen years in the radio broadcasting industry. I've worked about equal amount of time, both before and after the 1996 Telecom. Act. After its passage, I had to leave a job in Miami, thank's to such job-eliminating techniques as automation and voice-tracking. A job I once held as a graduate assistant at a University of Florida radio station no longer exists, having been combined into another nonstudent job position.

I don't think I'm alone in the experiencing these things. While we -- maybe myself included -- initially thought that the '96 ownership rule changes would open up new opportunities for those who have a real love of the broadcasting business, the result's been largely the opposite, kicking many talented broadcasters to the curb in the process.

Many of these people work, as I do now, in jobs completely unassociated from broadcasting in spite of possessing the training and experience in the field that they
Personally, I do commend the Commission for your creation of a low-power radio service, as I'm working with a small group of individuals at the Civic Media Center in Gainesville to get 94.7 WGOT-LP up and running to serve the Gainesville community.

In this day and age, 24-hour news cycles, a lack of diversity of ownership has made these cycles resemble something closer to a circus clown unicycle. Doesn't stop with news, public affairs and talk programming either. The same cookie-cutter music formats impressed upon market after market is the result of another visible track record when it comes to program diversity and localism.

The state of broadcasting must change. And relaxing media cross-ownership rules will not eliminate this; in fact, it will have the opposite effect.

The ownership rules were relaxed -- as members of the commission you no doubt hear much from organizations, such as the FAB and the NAB. Of course, these organizations represent the license-holding corporations that stand to profit from increased conglomeration and job-market downsizing.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. SOWDER: The American public that owns the airwaves deserves better.
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. SOWDER: Thank YOU.

MR. SIGALOS: Tom Krumreich.

(No audible response.)

Tom Krumreich.

(No audible response.)

Mary Schoonover.

MS. SCHOONOVER: Good evening. My name is Mary Schoonover. I've been a resident of Pinellas County, Florida, for the past 20 years.

And I'm currently serving on the City Council of Bellaire Beach. Our town is located on a barrier island in the Gulf of Mexico, just west of Clearwater and Largo. Although we are a community of only about 1600 citizens, we've developed a cable TV station which broadcasts public-service announcements, a bulletin board, local and regional events, and more importantly, we broadcast video replays of all city meetings, candidate interviews and other public information items that might be of interest or affect our residents.

So we've got a city channel. What does that have to do with media consolidation?

On the surface you might say nothing; however, last Friday the Florida House and Senate passed legislation that kills public access, educational and government TV in...
Florida. A bill has been sent to the Governor that transfers cable franchising from cities and counties to the state. It allows existing cable franchises to terminate their franchises and eliminates obligations for funding public, educational and government-access channels. It eliminates free services to government buildings and schools and eliminates local authority over consumer issues.

This is a pattern. It is no accident that this legislation is being passed at the same time that corporate media is attempting to monopolize our airwaves.

Not only do they want the opportunity to buy up multiple outlets in the same geographic area, but they want the ability to take over and limit the public access, educational and government channels and sell them back to us, the original owners.

As you can see by the testimony offered here today, the Tampa Bay market will not go quietly. We will be carefully monitoring the FCC's deliberations in these matters, and we will hold each of you commissioners responsible for your individual conduct in --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Neil Cosentino.

MR. COSENTINO: Good evening. My name is...
Neil Cosentino. I'm a member of Camelot, a Florida public interest think tank. I'm the project manager for a program called Camelot Community Media Network.

We propose a transition to a more balanced approach to the licensing of the radio spectrum. We are working towards an actual goal of 50/50 percent ownership; 50 percent owned by the public, and 50 percent owned by commercial entities. We do not believe this is radical. Community should only benefit directly from the expanded ownership of air rights and broadcasting rights.

Camelot Florida believes that the most empowering element is community radio. Imagine if it was as easy to obtain broadcasting rights, as it is to get a car registration, why the power of community-based radio would spread across America and make an incredible positive influence on our society.

If we -- (inaudible) -- the FCC's proposal to allow companies to own more radio stations in a given area, there's no doubt that this would be harmful to the interest of our communities. Please vote against that proposal.

Low-powered community radio in the nation should be championed so the community's -- (inaudible) -- of one. But one -- (inaudible)
-- to access should be able to get them.

We ask you to be the change you want in America. We're asking you to be the change. So please vote for the vitalization of broadband (sic) for the greatest possible good for the greatest number of citizens.

Please empower -- (Inaudible) -- and support community radio.

Remember that each of you can be the change you want for America.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. COSENTINO: Please start right here.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Elly Wencka.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Elly Wencka.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Okay. Would the following, starting with Number 63, Lowell Stewart Harris, come down, Anthony Lepore, Jaime D'Soto, Mark Paul Plutho, Delaanga Maryho, Lucille Griggs.

Norma Bostock?

MS. BOSTOCK: Yes.

MR. SIGALOS: Okay.

MS. BOSTOCK: The radio waves belong to the people, and they should reflect what we have in common and our diversity. We need to keep regulations that don't allow just a few
corporations to have only their point of views disseminated around the country. We need more local ownership. We need more diversity. With the raises in our country, there should be more media with Black ownership.

What is happening in our neighborhoods besides the crime?

We need more local broadcasters and more opportunities for local entertainers on our airwaves. Newspaper ownership and electronic media should be separate. We do not want the oligarchy telling us what to think.

And how many news media are going to give sufficient time to show this FCC meeting today?

I get my news from WMNF community radio or public access or alternative magazines. When I want to catch the lottery numbers, I change from news channel to news channel, and they’re all showing the name news.

I mean, all they really separate? And then it goes on for 15 minutes. That’s your evening news. They love violence of all kinds.

What about the people who are addicted, the gentrification of our neighborhoods?

We don’t find that in our local news, especially on TV. And I please ask you, as somebody else did, that the TV channels give free access to political candidates and save...
A VOICE: You bet.

MS. BOSTOCK: Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Lowell Stewart Harris.

Hello. I'm Lowell Harris, and I teach a large intro to mass comments -- society course at USF, and I'm also a doctoral candidate in communication.

I have been watching over the past week to see if any of our news outlets would publicize this hearing. And I was very disappointed.

Yesterday, there was columnist talking take about it in one article in the St. Pete Times. And finally today, the Tampa Tribune weighed in on the issue with a very disingenuous editorial.

Debate on media-ownership rules ignore realities of digital age, and they, as usual, refer to labeling -- resorted to labeling and mislabeling when they said -- and I quote -- "The FCC decided to lift the cross-ownership rule on newspaper-television ownership four years ago. But an appellate judge sent it back.

Then congressional democrats and union organizers hysterically began beating the drums to keep the old paradigm. Today's hearings are meant to inform the process. Our motive in writing today was to inform you,
Inform us? At the last minute?

We found nothing other than this, today, from the Tampa Tribune. I'll bet that if the public were really informed today, they would fill the rafters of this spacious hall (Applause.) Instead, what we have are two papers acting in their own best interests, not ours.

However I am very optimistic, based on what I heard from your opening statements, that we finally have the right FCC Commissioners in this group to make the right and the best decisions on our behalf to end this malignancy that has been created by a very divisive partisanship. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Anthony Lepore.

MR. LEPORE: Commissioners, I am here this evening on a matter germaine to tonight's discussion but unrelated to this market. I'm here on behalf of the Independent Small Broadcasters of the Island of Puerto Rico and the Puerto Rico Radio Broadcasters Association.

I'd like to ask that in the course of this review you correct an error in the prior ownership rule revising the definition of "Market" as it applies to Puerto Rico.

In the 2003 order you defined the relevant market in Puerto Rico, the same way
that Arbitron did, as being the entire island; however, Arbitron neglected to use the OMB's definition, which is the metropolitan statistical area, of which there are three upon the island, and rather island used the overall island as a market definition. We would like, on behalf of the independent broadcasters on the island, that this deficiency be corrected in the current proceeding and use either the OMB's definition, there, to wit, make the relevant market, the three metropolitan statistical areas on the island or choose whatever definition you decide to apply in the nonarbitrated -- nonArbitron-rated markets. And in that manner you will help promote the success and the independence of the independently broadcasters in Puerto Rico. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Jaime Soto.

MR. SOTO: Hello. My name is Dr. Jaime Soto. I'm executive vice president of programming for Uno Radio Group in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Thanks for the opportunity.

We are a small local family-owned company founded by my father, Jesus Soto, in 1973, through a lot of hard work by him, my brothers and myself and about 489 employees that we have today.

We serve communities in all of Puerto
Rico. We donate our time to local and national charities, my little -- for -- (Inaudible.)

Last year we created a foundation in memory of my brother who was a broadcaster dedicated to his people and his community. He died in a car accident two years ago.

The foundation gives scholarships to talented students in economical needs in the areas of communication, music and arts. This is one of the many ways that we impact our local communities.

Distinguished Commissioners, allow us to expand our business so as to serve different communities throughout Puerto Rico in a more effective and powerful way. We bring resources of larger stations to smaller communities on island, and we strive on localism.

Remember, Puerto Rico, because of its topographical conditions, no single station covers the whole island. So we need networks of at least three stations to cover it.

We urge the Commissioners to look at the specific case of Puerto Rico so that small companies like ours compete more effectively with American technologies, like iPod, Internet and against the big national media companies that have already established
operation on the island.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. SOTO: Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Mark Paul Klutho.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: delaangela Maryho.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Lucille Griggs.

Lucille, before you begin, I’m going to read a few names to come down to the microphone. I’m going to read a few more names this time. Please pay attention.

Patrick Flannigan, Barry Shalinsky, Bill Stokes, Jamie Johnston, Steve Brown, Arlene Haigh, Adrien Helm, Edward Helm, Bill Diaz. Thank you.

Lucille Griggs.

MS. GRIGGS: Thank you.

Thank you, Commissioners, for coming to Tampa for listening to our comments.

I’m a second-generation native of Tampa, and I have seen this area change so much. And as it’s grown and changed, it has become increasingly more difficult to find substantial information on local issues; and this is in spite of the fact that I am fortunate enough to have daily access to both the Tribune and The Times, to cable television and broadband Internet access.

That’s a lot more access to information than so many people have. And, yet, when I
want the deeper story, the investigative report, the analysis of an issue, I'm still searching.

I have to wait until Friday, when La Gaceta comes out. I have to make sure that I'm in my car around lunchtime, so I can listen to public affairs programs on WMNF. I have to search out the schedules for the local candidate debates on our public educational and government access channels.

Commissioners, as you're here in Tampa, take a look beyond Media General, take a look at our locally-owned, locally-controlled and noncommercial media outlets. You're going to find that that is where the public is engaged -- (Applause) -- and that is where our community is being served.

Please make sure that your rules promote localism, diversity, independence and noncommercialism. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Patrick Flanagan.

MR. FLANAGAN: My name is Patrick Flanagan. I'm a student at the University of Florida. And I've got a two-hour trip back to Gainesville after this, so I can take my last final tomorrow morning.

But this is an issue, I think, that is worth the trip. As a believer in a free
market, I prefer the deregulation, including allowing consolidation of media. We live in a digital and new media sources are emerging everywhere you look.

I get my media from all over the place, the Alligator newspaper in Gainesville, sometimes the Gainesville Sun, the New York Times Electronic Newsletter and several blogs. I get my music from the Internet. My parents subscribe to satellite radio. And my dad reads the Trib', the Times, The Wall Street Journal and Cafe Hayek online.

Newspapers and TV news don't just compete with each other, they compete with a wide range of news sources. The advent of digital signals will allow even more consumer demands to be met by innovative entrepreneurs. That's the -- that's the beauty of capitalism. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Barry Shalinsky.

MR. SHALINSKY: I oppose the consolidation of media ownership. Eight On Your Side does well with exposing petty rip-off schemes and consumer reports and charitable events. But it's sadly lacking in any kind of in-depth analysis of real news in our community.

In fact, you can turn on any of the mainstream television stations, and they will all give commentary from the same professor at
USF as their "political expert."

Prior to living in the Tampa area, I've lived in several places around the country, and I've observed what's happened with local media.

In a town in Kansas, where I lived, there was a local radio station that had local news, farm reports, city commissioners would come on every week to talk about what was going on. Well, they sold out to a "regional" conglomerate. And within six months all of that went away.

In conclusion, I just want to say that we need more diversity, more opportunities, low-power FM and more opportunity for people to know what's going on and to create their own news and create their own culture.

Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Bill Stokes.

MR. STOKES: My name is Bill Stokes, and I'm a member of the Alliance for a Liveable Pinellas, which is a coalition of conservation groups representing 15,000 members.

The present media industry in America is broken. You all have an opportunity to leave a legacy to your descendents of either reforming it or maintaining the status quo of espousing principles that are detrimental to a free press and thus democracy.
This is a nonpartisan issue that affects all Americans. Localism is in danger, when it comes to media coverage. There are many examples of the lack of critical information in covering the frequent hurricanes that are not uncommon to Florida. Oftentimes, TV is vulnerable and/or inoperable and not as capable of issuing up-to-the minute warnings as radio.

When the spectrum is panned (sic) on radio for local advisories, preprogrammed, canned, homogenized national play lists are on the air devoid of essential local safety alerts.

All media presently is in a race to the bottom to dispense vulgarity, sensationalism, celebrity-worship, blatant, excessive consumerism, biased reporting slanted toward ownership views, scant of any local reporting, narrowing the demographic to only the 18- to 34-year-old and a pathetic lack of any semblance of an open, diverse, intelligent, community-responsive and competitive media environment.

Is this the exchange you feel is fulfilling the obligation to broadcast in the public interest for the use of the public airwaves?

Yes, the airwaves are part of the public commons (sic), and they are being abused.
This degradation must come to an end.
If the FCC continues to relax the oversight on corporate media, it will result in a serious deterioration of the free press, which is one of the most important components of democracy. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

Jamie Johnston.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Steve -- Steven Brown.

MR. BROWN: Most of my points have been covered. But I'm for rolling back not simply stopping media consolidation.

But beyond the question of who owns how many stations and what other media outlets and cross-ownership. It is a question of the content that beats (sic) down into almost all the broadcast media from a half-dozen major corporations.

Someone here said that he feels he's getting dumber for every minute he watches television. I would say that in addition to the influence, the negative influence of politics of our mass media, it is also bleeding the people who are going to become our next voters; in fact, they are creating by-the-media consumers (sic.)

And if the current FCC wishes to maintain this republic as a democracy, rather than an autocracy, it needs to reverse the pattern of
Please lessen the influence of advertising on the commercial media, especially the death grip on political speech, and do what you can to promote the creation and maintenance of a variety of public broadcast networks, not simply one anemic and politically- and commercially-constrained PBS or NPR (sic.)

It's a shame and a scandal that it is through the -- (inaudible) -- of the cable television organizations that we have C-Span doing what should be done in the name of the public and for the benefit of the public and to have to settle for scraps from the passing carriages of the network princes (sic.) Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Arlene Haigh.

MS. HAIGH: My name is Arlene Haigh. I'm God-fearing, a capitalist and a proud American citizen.

Ten years ago I reported for a small newspaper owned by a media conglomerate. Naively, I thought that a part-time position meant part-time, not part-time pay -- close to minimum wage -- for a full-time workload. Without a trust fund, this career path was not an option.

Did I mention that was 10 years ago?

Instead, I am pooling my skills with the
money-making side of the media equation:
Advertising.

My experience includes both print and broadcast ad sales. I know that advertising works and that there is money to be made, that small businesses with small budgets struggle to reach consumers.

Conversely, the larger businesses can project an image frequently enough to brand superiority in the mind's eye of the consumers. Businesses with a large enough ad budget can actually buy editorial content.

It seems to me that media companies' profit motive is accepted now, the result of which is the sacrifice of news content and the promotion of large business at the expense of the small, the projection of loud voices as a sacrifice to the weak.

I believe that further consolidation will exacerbate this existing problem. Further consolidation will decrease advertising competition, editorial voices and will ultimately result in artificially high ad rates.

I hardly cry (sic) for large media companies who whine about stagnating double-digit profit margins due to the arrival of the Internet. They are already making money, because of the Internet, through Internet advertising.
Please investigate their income statements. We agree that news is different than the consumer will -- or tangible good has the power to influence minds with truth or spin.

Do you really expect the public to believe that fewer people deciding what is newsworthy is somehow beneficial? Has anybody complained about local weather coverage?

Many sources foretold of Katrina's path.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MS. HAIGH: But, really, when that happens is storm -- what really matters is what happens after the storm and that there are many voices, reporters --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MS. HAIGH: -- and decision makers covering it.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

Adrien Helm.

MS. HELM: Good evening. My name is Adrien Helm, and I live in St. Petersburg. I'm a refugee from inside the beltway and have lived in Florida for almost 20 years. I'm a retired educator from Meadowlawn Middle School, which will be a name familiar to at least one commissioner. I also, among other things, co-host a weekly radio show on contemporary issues in Tampa Bay and in Florida. As a teacher of
literacy, I am profoundly committed to the power of the story. And, so, Commissioners, I have a story for you, a bedtime story, if you will, a bedtime story to the idea of further consolidation. The story I hope is one that is familiar to you.

It starts in the Dorchester neighborhood of Boston, Massachusetts, where high school students there, high school girls, were so tired of hearing their gender and races demeaned in mainstream media on the radio, that they decided to do something about it.

Someone had taught these young women of color that the airwaves belonged to the people of the United States. And, so, with the help of caring adults, four of them established a radio station, Our Log 540 AM, in 2004.

And now I'm going to hurry.

They learned public speaking, broadcast journalism, organizational skills, fundraising, collaboration as they -- and how to collaborate with one another as they picked music. They now are a power within the community.

This story demonstrates a central theme about America. And it speaks to your sacred trust. Diversity, not homogenization, is our strength. We need many voices to speak to us, not few.
If the media gets a story wrong -- I'm hurrying -- or in the case of these young women -- tells untruths, we are all diminished. Please to do your duty.

Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Edward Helm.

MR. HELM: Retired -- Alliance for Retired Americans member, gray-haired Ed Helm. I voluntarily retired from federal service inside the beltway, Solicitor's Office, U.S. Department of Labor, Civil Rights lawyer. Involuntarily retired to chair the Democratic Party in Pinellas County.

(Applause.)

I come here to praise the FCC and to criticize it. I've submitted a statement adopting the more-focussed part of this to your people outside, adopting Congressman Kucinich's statement that we used three or fours years ago, when ABC was trying pummel him.

I think it capitalizes, certainly, my views, and, so, I won't repeat those.

But praise God. By the way, Kucinich had the only storefront office in the primaries for Democratic candidates in the Tampa Bay Area. So what does that say about the importance of media and the importance of grassroots and citizen organizing?

A look at homicide. We have sociologists...
in Florida. Dr. Leonard Begley (Phonetic), writing this book on homicide, points out something that the Commission is starting to look, violence on TV and what we're doing to our children.

Dr. Begley points out that the average child sees four hours of television a day; in the process of one year, they see over 12,000 acts of violence. He points out that this is pernicious, this is leading to homicide. It's in the book on Pages 141, 142 and 143.

As a person of faith, I know the scripture again and again condemns violence as it does greed.

Now for the criticism. We need your help in returning the Fairness Doctrine and the political courage -- (Applause) -- the political courage to make sure that candidates don't have to sell their souls to raise money, that, like in Europe, they're into airtime for candidates so that they can focus on real things. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Will the following people come to the microphone. I'm at Number 79. Karen Burns, Al Frederick, John Polo, Phillip Harris, Charles Rice, Brenda Young, Kevin Moore, Thomas Lincoln, Barbara Skogman, Mike Fox.

Bill Diaz.

(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Karen Burns.

MS. BURNS: Thank you, and thank you for coming and thank you for your stamina today listening to all of us. I'm going to go to the end and then to the beginning, just in case I don't get to the end the second time.

I speak for the League of Women Voters of the State of Florida. I'm on the board. And we're very concerned about the consolidation issue. We don't have all the answers. But we would ask you to ask the right questions and -- as doctors that are committed to, to do no harm.

An informed, elected electorate is the bedrock of a healthy democracy. And we ask you to consider whether further consolidation is going to help support citizens' right to know or whether it will further erode it. Will it further curtail local coverage? Will it further squelch diverse voices? Those are our concerns.

And as you know, the League of Women Voters have been a long-term stubborn advocate for openness in government, at all levels, including promoting an open-air -- (Inaudible) -- system which -- (Inaudible) -- representative accountable, responsive and which assures opportunities for public participation and supports the citizen's right to know.

The mission of the League of Women Voters
Voters, in fact, is to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens and their government. That's getting tougher and tougher to do, particularly at the local level.

And inasmuch as the informed electorate is the bedrock of a healthy democracy, consolidation in the media industry might limit that.

The discussion today here shows you the passion that we have in the Tampa Bay Area for our media. At the local level, there has been an erosion, I believe, in the coverage, and particularly around general election time for local races.

And when you combine that with the high cost of advertising, more and more diverse voices and potential candidates, we fear, are being excluded from participation. Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Al Frederick.

MS. BURNS: an e-mail address where we can submit full testimony?

MR. SIGALOS: Well, if you go to our website, fcc.gov -- www.fcc.gov.

MS. BURNS: Okay. Thanks very much.

MR. SIGALOS: Al Frederick.

MR. FREDERICK: Hi. My name is Al
Frederick, and I'm currently the communications officer for the state of Florida for LULAC, League of United Latin-American Citizens. I am the past president of the Tampa Bay Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and I currently work in the Mutual Aid Society, the center for the -- (Inaudible) -- of Tampa.

And what I wanted to say was, I've heard a lot of talk about media and the Tampa Tribune, Centro, Media Company. And I just wanted to say, you have to give credit where credit's due.

In the newspaper, Centro, which is the weekly publication by the Tampa Tribune in Spanish, there is not a day that goes by that I do not see their reporters, back around the street, reporting on what is happening on the Hispanic events here in Tampa.

About three years ago, the Tampa Tribune had a Hispanic market meeting -- town -- town-hall meeting where they wanted to know what the community thought about the Hispanic initiatives in the Tampa Tribune.

At that meeting, over 300 people participated and, well, it was very negative at that time period, saying that there was very little for the Hispanic market. Because of that, the Tampa Tribune launched the Centro magazine in Spanish to help the Hispanic market here in Tampa.
Six months ago, approximately, they had another town-hall meeting to find out how they were doing. At that meeting, only 60 people showed up. A lot of people wondered what happened. Well, when people don’t have anything to complain about, they don’t go. So it was a very good meeting. There was no complaints. And most of the people were very satisfied about what had happened in the newspaper about the -- about reporting about Hispanic events.

They have two reporters, and they’re at almost all the -- I would say at all, if not -- yeah, all of the Hispanic events that happen in Tampa. Thank you.

Mr. Sigalos: Thank you.

John Polo.

Mr. Polo: My name is John Polo. I’m -- I don’t have much to say, just to not allow any more consolidation. Thanks.

Mr. Sigalos: Thank you.

Phillip Harris.

Mr. Harris: Hi. I just want to thank you for coming to listen to us talk. I’m here to urge you to please do not relax media-ownership policy.

Years ago, I had a friend who lived in a small down that was experiencing troubles with flash floods. The only station that was on the air to help with emergency situations was
a low-power FM radio station who you may know as pirate radio operators.

The other stations in the area were either off the air or playing a distant satellite feed, and there wasn't even a local DJ in the studio to take calls.

Later, I was appalled to hear that the FCC shut that station down. But while it was on the air, it served as a vital link to the community.

Corporations like Clear Channel are the real pirates. They have no idea what music and what community affairs are really needed. On a shoestring budget of less than $2,000, a community can set up a low-power FM station and serve the needs of the community, not only in emergency situations, but in daily needs as well.

Civic group programs can be organized. Local public affairs can really be hatched out, local artists can play music to their communities, politicians can get true equal air time, and a community will grow again.

A corporation is not a citizen and could never respond to situations like this like citizens can. Every community in America should have a station that can provide a great service like that. And it's time to make some space on the dial for a true community again.

Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
MR. SIGALOS: Kevin Moore.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Thomas Lincoln.
I'm sorry. What is your name, sir?
MR. MOORE: Kevin Moore.
MR. MOORE: I've been passing out the America Freedom to Fascism DVDs. And I hope everyone in the commission would take a look at that. (Applause.)
And I thank you for being here and staying up late, and I really appreciate your time.
Power corrupts. Absolute power corrupts, absolutely. It's folly to consider policy where the most effective means of communication can be more easily manipulated.
Further media consolidation would set the stage for some kind of quasi-federal information czar. We don't want anything like that.
If I found out my neighbor lied or
withheld information to me, I would not trust him ever again, if he did it once or twice. Yet, government, it's their standard operating procedure. And the media-giant bedfellows spin, lie deception. The sixth plank of Karl Marx's Communist Manifesto calls for media consolidation, central control of the means of communication. Okay. (Applause.) It has many advantages. Central control has many advantages. But it's incompatible with our constitutional republic. I don't know whether you guys have taken oaths to support and effect the Constitution. But I hope you have.

A VOICE: Doesn't look like it.

MR. MOORE: Freedom of the press is guarded by jealous competition. Thomas Jefferson said, "Let no more be heard of confidence in men, but rather bind them down by the chains of the Constitution."

Same with your policy. We've got to have policy that we can trust. We don't have to trust a bunch of guys who are going to do what people do. They're fallible, corruptible human beings. We've got to limit their damage -- the damage they can do. World Trade Center Seven (sic), 9/11, let's -- not the media competition. At least the American public has heard about World
Trade Center Seven. Now, you can't let that continue. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

Thomas Lincoln.

MR. LINCOLN: Good evening.

I was listening to the testimony of some of the pro-consolidation -- I guess they call themselves convergents, I believe, advocates. And, you know, some of the excuses they gave I found offensively weak and not very compelling.

And I have trouble connecting their duty to serve the public interest as required by the FCC. They, you know, mentioned some of these charities, which is fine, except that I think that those broadcasters may be limiting and omitting other worthwhile charities, which is unfair.

And they have mentioned hurricane issues, which seems kind of a like "Duh, who wouldn't cover that," especially in -- (Applause.) Some of the things I got that I'd like to request is 1) Reinstate the Fairness Doctrine, 2) Increase the number of public-access channels and restore public-access channels to Pasco County, Florida, 3) -- and Pinellas -- thank you -- 3) undo the excesses -- excessive levels of consolidation already done, increase the numbers of owners from what they're currently...
at, 4) stop broadcasting lies and propaganda;
there should be more truth in reporting,
especially when they call it "News," 5)
penalize stations that refuse to run perfectly
fine ads, like nonprofits that want to get
their message out, they will yank the ad, 6)
eliminate any and all influence of advertise
over news content, 7) reduce the cost of
owning a station and make more channels
available without lots of requirements.
Thank you.  (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Barbara Skogman.

MS. SKOGMAN: Hi. I'm Barbara Skogman,
and I appreciate you coming. And I've had a
lot of so-called downtime the last ten years
due to illness and injuries. And, luckily, I
should be getting social security disability
benefits to help me.

But during this time I've had plenty of
time to watch and hear the media, but limited
reading due to physical limitations.
But I've noticed that the quality of
programming or the programs have -- has gone
down; for example, I really don't care who the
father of Anna Nicole's baby is. (Applause.)
And not only the quality has gone down,
but the quantity of the issues are limited
also. And, mainly, I rely on publicly
supported local WMNF, the radio station, first
to get my good news. And at least there,
there's no more Anna Nicole that I would have to listen to nonstop. Therefore, it's obvious that competition has profoundly been affected. And turning to politics, I want to mention the Fairness Doctrine again. That needs to be reinstituted. So, we need to bring it back where every station has to give equal time to every political party. They want the stations either being one way and are serving special interests versus public's interests; in other words, they are -- they are providing this as firmly-based facts, as the system stands today.

Most important, the press has to be the watch dog of a republic. They should be speaking truth, power, whether it's civilian or governmental.

Maybe if the media had been doing its job, we wouldn't be -- we wouldn't be in the Iraq War with those horrible consequences, spending billions, while we have children ill, whether mentally or physically, and more veterans who are hungry and are more homeless, living in -- on the street.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

MS. SKOGMAN: And I just have one more thing to say. There was a quote by an author that said, "The closer you get to power, the further you get from its truth." And it seems like that may apply in this case.
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MS. SKOGMAN: Thank you very much for listening.

MR. SIGALOS: Would Ersula Odom, Dale Braiman, Carlton Lewis, Dawn Morgan, Marc Vila, Joseph Wagner, David Caton, Julia Perkins, Francisca Cortes and Anthony Lorenzo, please come to the nearest mike.

Mike Fox.

MR. FOX: Thank you so much for being here. My name's Michael Fox. I'm a resident of St. Petersburg.

I hold a post-graduate degree in mass communication and I've taught at three universities. I got my third-class radio license at age 17, had a radio show, sold radio time, worked for an ad agency, worked in pay TV and produced low-budget feature movies shot for less than the cost of a good used car, yet what you see received redistribution through major U.S. retailers; in short, I'm a media geek.

One of my earliest memories was of my huddled around a small black-and-white TV screen glued to the channels with John F. Kennedy assassination and Oswald's demise.

And we all stared in disbelief at the video of planes striking the World Trade Center. The media is one of the most important elements of our society and arguably provides the single most common shared
experience for all of our citizens.

You all hold in your hands the awesome power to influence our country's general knowledge base. And I humbly submit that over the last 25 years, the Commission's record has been abysmal when it comes to ensuring a diversity of thoughtful views and ideas represented in the broad-access media.

As the result of the Anna Nicole Smithification of corporate news, we have a general public that's ill-informed and unprepared to build a society that addresses serious concerns regarding, among a host of other vital issues, the use of military might on others and an accurate assessment of our security.

Arguably, the greatest source of hope for any society is the open and active ongoing dialectic for more, not fewer, points of view, where diverse ideas are heard and encouraged.

So I ask the Commission, please, to tighten restrictions on multiple media ownership by individual corporations, to promote media ownership by less economically powerful entities, to bring back the Fairness Doctrine once again.

And for the citizenry, I ask you to promote the widest access to information possible, regardless of a person's ability to
pay for elitist premium-tier programming on
cable or the Internet. One's income cannot
determine one's access to information in a
just society. Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Ersula Odom.

MS. ODOM: Good evening.

I'm Ersula Odom, and I represent the
Weekly Challenger, which is a 40-year-old
African-American newspaper out of Clearwater,
serving the Tampa Bay Area.

I am not as much against one organization
as I am for the protection of another. I have
a computer background, meaning that I
advocated electronic performance support
systems. So electronic wizardry is
fascinating to me, and the interconnection of
information that they -- the large
organizations are able to do is good.

But it's not so much how they do it as
what they're talking about. What I am
concerned about is the preservation of my
history, my community's history, contribution
as a society.

Who will talk about what is going on in
the community by the real people, the people
that I happen to know, my sister, my cousin,
my brother, my uncle, whoever, people that I
can relate to and share stories about.

When and in a hard, real term (sic), we
talked about the Haitian issue, yes, we talked
about kindred needs, effort along those lines;  
but at the same time we also talked about the  
fact that it was a Haitian that settled  
Chicago and what -- Tussaud -- (inaudible) --  
did -- gave Napoleon Bonaparte a run for his  
money. That's the kind -- that's information  
that needs to be out there to spark  
discussion.

Now, I do have a question. I hear the  
numbers, 50 percent, 30 percent, 2 percent.  
And I understand that your charter is to  
fairly and equally disseminate the access to the airwaves.  
What are you saying to African-Americans  
and to minorities?

Does it take 25 to 1 for 1 basis point?

Are we not as worthy as the numbers say  
that we represent?

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

Dale Braiman.

MR. BRAIMAN: I'd like to begin my  
opening remarks by thanking Mr. Copps. I  
don't believe we'd be here today if it wasn't  
for the steadfast work that you've done in the  
last few years. (Applause.)  

My next remarks have to do with an  
observation tonight. It's very clear that our  
corporate representatives have made it a very  
steadfast point to make sure that the  
recipients of their largesse have been here to
compliment them.

Would it be much more to the benefit of us were they not to have informed us that this meeting was going to be here?

There has not been one person who has spoken against consolidation who thanked them for their information; which leads me to my second point; and that is, we all know the truth here. We're all adults.

Communications on this scale represent a balance between the role of the media in a democratic republic where information is vital and the role of the media in a market system where information may affect profits and power.

Recent moves that led to the public insistence upon these meetings by the FCC have indicated -- and it may be true -- that some of you value markets and profit more than information and democracy.

I don't want to believe that, because I heard your opening remarks. But if your opening remarks were true, why are you not embarrassed and shocked to the point of action over the fact that Americans today have been successfully manipulated to believe things that are not true from everything from the environment to the war in Iraq?

Why do we have to come to you to ask you to challenge the corporations that have made you think like a corporate -- (Applause) --
Very frankly, the trade -- (inaudible) -- the fundamental problem in America is not the great lie but that truth is irrelevant to the pursuit of self-interest.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.
Carlton Lewis.

MR. BRAIMAN: -- this should be your --

MR. SIGALOS: Carlton Lewis.

MR. LEWIS: My name is Carlton Lewis.

And mostly of what I want to say has been said already -- say the -- (inaudible) -- I'm not overly concerned so much about the consolidation or the individual different groups as opposed to that I have a choice.

Now, I was told that diversity -- I guess competition was going to help me out here in Tampa, when they had Clear Channel -- not Clear Channel but Bright House and Horizon come in.

And they said, "Well, we'll bring you competition." And then they have to -- to show me the -- the consumer, the end user, which is myself, I could see a lowering of the cost of my cable bill.

So I don't understand, you know, how this is allowed to happen. Because you said with diversity or profit or competition is going to help us so much, it didn't help me. And I don't see it. I still want that choice.
And with the growth all around us, I see a connection. The people working in Orlando or St. Pete, they all coming to Tampa, Pasco County, Pinellas County, from all different counties -- from all -- from parts of central and west Florida.

And we are not just a small town. That boy that was putting his own newspaper could not impact on any media, because he doesn't have the -- the money or the mechanism -- may not appear at his house to let me know what's going on (sic.)

I need to know in the region -- I just think regionally and not locally -- and that's all I want you to do (sic.) The demise of the public -- public education and -- (inaudible) -- channel it was told this evening, came to me as a shock.

We have people that've been elected, have not been doing their duties. They need to understand they're letting the public down.

And I think, if anything that you can do about that is -- in the state legislature, or whatever, is to make sure that you remain vigilant and not allow this whole erosion of our freedoms. And it mocks the freedom of speech among all. I think you know what you need to do here today. Do your job.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Dawn Morgan, Dawn Morgan, Marc Vila,
Joseph Wagner, David Caton, Julia Perkins.

MR. LORENZO: I'm Anthony Lorenzo. You called me earlier.

MR. SIGALOS: I'm sorry?

MR. LORENZO: You called me in the last batch. Anthony Lorenzo.

MR. SIGALOS: Oh, okay. All right.

MR. LORENZO: I've been living here in the Tampa community for the last 20 years. I've been an activist and an organizer and a volunteer in numerous campaigns.

I just wanted to talk to you a little about my experience with the media here in the Tampa Bay Area and omissions that I felt were critical in some things I've worked on.

In 2004 I was a volunteer campaign coordinator for the Kucinich for President Campaign and the Democratic Primary. He came down to Florida and spoke at the Orlando Democratic State Convention.

And the St. Pete Times showed him most prominently in their picture on the front page, front and center, center of the picture. They went from left to right and named every candidate but Dennis Kucinich.

Now, that omission is significant, because Dennis Kucinich was the only candidate that voted against the Patriot Act. He was the only candidate that voted against the war in Iraq that was in that race. And yet they...
didn't feel like his presence and positions newsworthy. That's pitiful.

I've also organized cannabis legalization rallies here in the Tampa community for the last ten years. I worked as the volunteer coordinator for the Florida Cannabis Action Network.

WMNF has been at every single one of our events, put us on the air. In our experience here in the Tampa Bay market, the St. Pete Times, the Tampa Tribune have never showed up for our protest. I send a press release. I call them every time to make sure they've got my press release. No coverage. It's like we don't exist.

That's what happens to unpopular movements, like myself, that may not have majority support in our community. And we're probably the groups you should be talking to to find out how censored the media is here.

As far as the television media, we had -- ABC showed up for our last two protests, out of ten. And they put a maybe ten-second spot on the air, "Protesters Legalize Marijuana." They didn't include any of the interviews or the talking points or any in-depth coverage of the issue.

You know, so WFLA and the Tampa Tribune have never covered our events. I'm very much opposed to allowing them to converge with more markets and silence our message through more
mediums. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Julia; Perkins.

MS. PERKINS: Hi. My name is Julia Perkins, and I work with the Coalition of Immokalee Workers. And I'm a listener of La Consciencia, here in Immokalee, Florida. It's a low-power radio station.

The Coalition of Immokalee Workers, in Immokalee, Florida, is an organization based in the community made up of workers who come mostly from Guatemala, Mexico and Haiti, and who are the lowest-paid, worst-protected workers in the county, who put together this amazing radio station, that I am thankful to be able to listen to every day, especially when I have to go to Ft. Myers or Naples, and all I can get on the radio are the same ten songs.

So you -- I swear, every time I go outside of Immokalee, I hear -- I can tune to any station and hear the same ten songs. And I can't find any news, and I can't find anything else. So it is a breath of fresh air to drive -- to get about eight miles outside of Immokalee and turn to 107.9.

That's why it was deeply stunning to me to hear that one of the stations that we helped to set up a low-powers from Immokalee went out and said -- (Inaudible) -- and helped
set up a low-power station out there.

And they are facing the possibility of encroachment, that there's a commercial station that wants the space that they can exist in -- hurt their signal -- I don't know what the technical term is -- and that that commercial station would have priority over this low-power station that just got off the ground maybe a little less than a year ago.

Because I know that that station is breathing fresh air into that community as well. And it's important to have bases for people who don't have a voice in any other way, to be able to speak, to be able to be heard by their community and to be able to talk about the issues that are important to them.

And, so, I thank you for -- for your work, really, setting out low-power stations. But I encourage you to protect low-power and full-power stations for communities. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

Would the following people go to the nearest microphone. Winnie Foster, Lauren Hallahan, Doreen Donovan, Doug Bevins, Eric Smith, Karen Landers, Joyce Smith, Eliot Steele, Richard Crandall, Jay Alexander, Scott Shoemaker.

The next person I'm going to speak, in
one moment, will be Francisca Cortes. But I just want everybody to know we're -- you may be curious. I just read out through -- the last name I read was number 110. It's 20 till 11:00, and we're getting fairly close to a situation. We're not there yet. We have --

A VOICE: I haven't spoken yet.

MR. SIGALOS: Yes. You are amongst a group of people that haven't spoken, which is the situation I'm getting ready to refer to. And what we're going to do, we're trying our very best to hear everybody who wants to speak here tonight. That is the reason why we are here in Tampa, Florida.

We also have to respect that we contracted with Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center for a certain amount of time, and we have budget restrictions.

So what we're going to be doing is do as many as we can till 11 o'clock. At that point in time, we're going to step back, what we can do, to 90-seconds per person and work through to 11:30.

And we believe that we will be able to catch everybody's comments by doing it that way. So let's keep going.

Francisca Cortes.

MS. PERKINS: Francisca will need translation. So I don't know if the translator is prepared for that.
MR. SIGALOS: Are we prepared for that?
MS. PERKINS: Or I can do it.
MR. SIGALOS: You can do it?
MS. PERKINS: I can do it.
MS. CORTES: I am Francisca Cortes, and I’m a member of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

I’m a DJ on Radio Consciencia, and I just want to share with you the importance that it has to our community. And it’s not the same as a commercial radio station, as many of you here know.

Commercial radio stations don’t talk about issues that are important to women, like domestic violence. And many of the women in our community don’t even speak Spanish, so we use the radio to speak to them in their indigenous languages.

And so I hope you take that into consideration and understand the importance of community radio stations to communities like ours. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Winnie Foster.

MS. FOSTER: Hello. The poet likes the news has written a beautiful poem (sic.) I carry a line of it on my business card from the Sojourna Truth Center in St. Petersburg, Florida.

And it says, “Let America be America again, the land that never was but yet could..."
And, so, I think we all realize how far we are from the vision that many of us want, that we are in perilous times; our country is in perilous times.

And at almost 80, I'm looking to young people, I'm looking to the people who are passionate to organize, organize, organize. We, the people, must speak, we must demand. And I don't know what you all are going to do. We always have to wait and find out. But I will assure you that the people here who are passionate about these issues and the unsolved problems in our country are not going to give up. (Applause.) Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Lauren Callahan.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Lauren Callahan.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Doreen Donovan.
MS. DONOVAN: Good evening. I'm here representing myself in support of increasing the diversity in Tampa-based radio, in television stations, satellite and cable communications and various media outlets.
I'm here to encourage the FCC to require that these outlets more closely reflect the communities that they operate within. The only way to ensure that diversity and localism occurs is to limit the ownership of these
outlets by the mega-media giants.

In this age when many people have access to information from so many various sources, it's imperative that these sources remain independent.

When the supply of information is allowed to be controlled by a few large conglomerates that are allowed to own numerous radio stations, newspapers and TV stations, the result can only be a watered-down, generalized, sanitized rendition of the news. Information becomes hobbled by the restrictions and limitations of those few corporations.

Large national chains that continue to gobble up small local media outlets, while effectively streamlining costs and increasing profits, generally fail to address the needs, views and interests of the communities they operate in.

The formulas and formats are repeated again and again, so that the radio and TV stations in Toledo, Ohio, sound and look just like the ones in Tampa, Florida.

While entertainment seems to be the driving force of many of the media outlets, news that is accurate, unbiased and relative to the region needs to be provided to the people.

And it's the role of the FCC to ensure that the public airwaves continue to serve the
public; therefore, I'm here this evening to ask you to stand firm to the commitment of the
FCC to ensuring that the American people have access to communication services that are without discrimination.

And to fulfill that commitment, the FCC needs to keep a larger portion of those communication vehicles in the hands of the independent and locally owned and operated providers. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Doug Bevins.

MR. BEVINS: Thank you for listening. All I have to say has been said, I guess, throughout the night, here, by different people, different ways.

James Madison once described the American Democracy is just, like, on one end of the cycle you have the elected leader who educate the public by their acts. The public instructs when they vote.

Lincoln said it in a different way. He said it's a government of the people. The idea is that the sensibilities and the values of the people bubbles up to provide guidance to the elected leaders.

John Stuart Mills gave us the metaphor of the marketplace of ideas, a place where different policies and ideas could compete, be sampled by the public, and then the public can
decide which t o a c c e p t , a n d t h e y c a n b e
enacted. T h a t ' s t h e w a y i t ' s s u p p o s e d t o
work.

W h a t w e h a v e n o w i s l e s s d i v e r s i t y i n t h e
media g o i n g o n a n d a m a r k e t p l a c e t h a t i s
narrowing. I t ' s s i m p l e h u m a n n a t u r e t h a t i f
you a r e t h e o w n e r o f a m a r k e t o u t l e t , y o u w i l l
determine i t s c o n t e n t . B e y o u S a l z b e r g e r o r
M u r d o c k , y o u w i l l c l o s e t h e d o o r t o c e r t a i n
i d e a s , t o c e r t a i n p o l i c i e s .

T h e l e s s o w n e r s h i p t h e r e i s , t h e l e s s
diversity you w i l l h a v e i n t h e m a r k e t p l a c e .
T h i s w e a k e n s t h e l i n k s b e t w e e n t h e p u b l i c a n d
t h e i r e l e c t e d l e a d e r s . T h i s w a t e r s d o w n t h e
marketplace of i d e a s .

N o b o d y ' s s a t i s f i e d w i t h t h e f u n c t i o n o f
our media now. I d o n ' t t h i n k t h a t a n y b o d y i n
this room i s s a t i s f i e d w i t h t h e i r f u n c t i o n s .
I t h i n k i t ' s t i m e f o r u s t o s t e p b a c k a n d
do -- I h o p e y o u w i l l t o o -- w h a t M a d i s o n
proposed.

Consult y o u r e x p e r i e n c e , c o n s u l t t h e
experience of a l l A m e r i c a n s a n d c o n s u l t t h e i r

values, t h e i r r e s p e c t f o r t h e m a r k e t p l a c e o f
ideas, t h e w a y i t s h o u l d f u n c t i o n , t h e l i n k
between t h e p u b l i c a n d t h e e l e c t e d p e o p l e a n d
make our d e m o c r a c y m o r e h e a l t h y b y e n s u r i n g
m o r e d i v e r s i t y i n t h e m e d i a . T h a n k y o u .

(A p p l a u s e .)

M R . S I G A L O S : T h a n k y o u .
E r i c s m i t h .

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(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Karen Landos.

MS. LANDERS: It's Landers like Ann.

MR. SIGALOS: Oh, okay.

MS. LANDERS: Thank you for coming to Florida to see us. And I'm from Polk County, which is the next county over. It's agricultural. And because we're between Tampa and Orlando, we get the glory of your consolidated media, twofold.

I can listen to a drug-addled hatemonger talk on the radio six different stations at a time during the day. (Laughter & Applause.) So I'm driving around the country in Polk County sometime. Try it.

Does this little dude (sic) really belong in this county?

Is this what we want for America, our comments, our radio stations?

My high school graduation class, in 1969, donated an entirely equipped TV station to the high school so that the students coming after us could learn how to broadcast, could learn how to produce. We were proud of American media.

With the destruction of the Fairness Doctrine, our media automatically became somehow uncivilized. Now we are at each other's throats. And it's killing us. We have serious things we have to take care of in
Our comments (sic), our broadcasting has to be open to all of us. It cannot be consolidated just for money. Because you've pushed us too far, gentlemen. We're going to take it back. (Applause.) Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Joyce Smith.

MS. SMITH: Thank you so much for staying so late. My name is Joyce Smith.

2004, it was a very good year for Hurricanes Charlie, Frances, Ivan, Jeanne. It was the terrifying. I was one of the lucky ones. My home only lost power for a few days in one storm and a week in another. I was completely dependent on the radio.

I do not have a battery TV, and I was trying to conserve what batteries I did have. So I turned on my radio. I listened diligently for news, especially school closings.

I teach at Hillsborough Community College and at times found it difficult to hear all the closings. Did they say "HCC" or "HCS." I listened for the news about what streets, what streets are flooded or have downed power lines.

I needed to know which way to go to work, so I tuned in to the radio. Some man is talking on the radio, and he's point- -- he says he's pointing to a map.

What map? This is the radio. This radio
news had a simulcast from the TV station. I keep listening to my radio. I hear "Schmidt" (sic), not a place for comfort during a crisis period.

The entertainer pundit fills our precious airwaves with messages of intolerance, disdain and disrespect. Now, he's talking about the storm. How much time is Clear Channel giving this guy? Heaven forbid, he's on more than one station. He's yakking with some guy in Palm Beach.

I want to know:
Is Kennedy and Dale Mabry flooded?
Can I drive on the local roads?
Can I get to Ybor?
What is happening in Tampa?

Clearly, big media is not helpful during a crisis. Our community issues are ignored by the media giants. Very little discussion is given to issues important to the citizens.

We get to listen to the repulsively and distasteful rants during the weekend by Hannity in -- (inaudible) -- like the --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MS. SMITH: -- in case you missed their daily --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

Eliot Steele.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Richard Crandall.

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of the media that you have been hearing
criticized quite a lot tonight. And I
compliment the Commissioners for your patience and your courtesy and for listening to everybody for the last six or seven hours or so.

I began by broadcast career some 40 years ago in Montana. And I filed a couple of the comments with the Commission electronically a couple of years ago regarding Hurricane -- (Inaudible) -- our last speaker was just talking about, echoing her feelings -- and on the current issues as well through your website.

I appreciate the opportunity to do that. However, I'd like to address one other issue that hasn't really been talked about tonight; would not have expected to, and that is the effect of the decision that you make on the people who work in broadcasting, people like myself, and the resulting job insecurity that has evolved from the concentration of ownership.

And I'd like to quote from the website of a colleague of mine that I just lifted off the Web earlier this weekend.

"Radio just isn't what it once was," he says, "budget cuts mean less jobs in the industry and a lot of old timers are sitting on
the beach waiting for the next call, that more often than not, does not come.

I could stab (sic) a living radio station utilizing the talent of those unemployed at the current -- tremendous talent in the employment line. That is what radio has become today."

Please consider not only the opinions of the people who are listening to radio, watching television, reading newspapers, but the people who are in the industry itself.

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Jay Alexander.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Would the following people please come to the mike. Mary Gerken, Sumati Villaman, Ellen Thompson, Larry Thurmond, Graham Thompson, T.C. Corrigan, Herman Salas, Steven Norris, Nancy Norris, Susan Haig.

Scott Shoemaker.

MR. SHOEMAKER: Mr. Moderator, I was in the last batch. I am Scott Shoemaker.

MR. SIGALOS: Yeah. Scott Shoemaker.

MR. SHOEMAKER: Good evening. Members of the panel, thank you for coming to Tampa.

My name is Scott Shoemaker. I am an off-air local -- (Inaudible) -- and technician in the Clearwater area. And I wanted to give you some insight from people who are in the
industry.

The off-air digital transmissions have been well-received and now becoming aged within the household and the business. Please do not ever let the digital signals go the way of the February 2009 (sic) analogue carriers that we certainly allowed the grip (sic) of cable and satellite, which is highly unfortunate.

I would like to highlight many stations, 3.1 or PBS, 3.5, the 24-7 HD, the 8.2 and the 10.2 weather are very, very important especially in any kind of bad weather.

My question, as you're pondering the next move: What will be the -- (Inaudible) -- function program for people who do rely on off-air in the 2009 window, when they will have to fall from the analogue provision to the digital conversion?

Could there be some changes made in each DMA?

For example, could feeds from another DMA been moved to the Tampa -- (Inaudible) -- tower; for example, could Tampa also have a PBS feed out of Orlando to provide more programming in a parallel -- (Inaudible) -- could, for example, the WWSB Channel 40 ABC in Bradenton also come to the Tampa tower to provide a second ABC feed?

And, as other people have pointed out, could public-access programming currently on
low power come up to the Tampa tower located in Brandon as a standard definition DTV signals provide better coverage (sic.)

And last, but not least, many, many people in my counties simply cannot afford cable. They cannot afford satellite. They are dependent on the traditional off-air. Whether they like the digital yet or not, they're still dependent like the -- (inaudible) -- to continue. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
MR. SHOEMAKER: Thank you and God bless America (Applause.)
MR. SIGALOS: Mary Gerken.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Sumali Villaman.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Ellen Thompson.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Larry Thurmond.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: Graham Thompson.
(No audible response.)
MR. SIGALOS: T.C. Corrigan.
MR. CORRIGAN: Hi. Thanks for coming tonight. Thanks for coming to Florida, since we seem to be a place where pretty much a ton of important news for America happens. I'm a recent graduate of the media communications studies master's program at
Florida State University. And I'd like to talk about two issues related to media and education.

Gannett, the largest newspaper chain in the country, a company which last year posted profits of eight billion dollars, up almost six hundred million dollars from the year before -- granted this was a really tough year for the newspaper industry, you've heard. (Laughter & Applause) -- well, they -- they last August purchased the FSU Florida Flambeau, which is the university -- or it's the student newspaper serving the Florida State community.

It's the first student newspaper in the country to be bought by a major newspaper chain. And they were, basically, doing a study to converge the Tallahassee Democrat and the audience -- or the readers of the Florida State community to be able to take advantage of the opportunities there to, basically, milk the community of our money (sic.)

They said that this was just a one-time thing, that they weren't going to do this anymore. And then this past February 14, Gannett purchased the Central Florida Future, the student newspaper at the University of Central Florida.

Student newspapers provide an alternative viewpoint that I think is very important, and
it's incredibly discouraging to know that they're being bought by major newspaper chains.

I'd also like to say that regardless of what your decisions are in the next coming months, I would love for the commission to stand behind a policy to encourage media literacy in high school.

There's lots of major production programs in high schools, but I think that media literacy is something this country is sorely missing. So thank you.

(MPause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Herman Salas.

(No audible response.)

Steven Norris.

(No audible response.)

Nancy Norris.

(No audible response.)

Susan Haig.

(No audible response.)

Will the following people please come down to the microphones. Andres -- Andres Lopez, Alan Lipke, Mii Carter, Lisa Montelione, Mark Wachowiak, Don Hackett, Michael Levinson, Susan James, Jim Zaharis and Mark Skogman.

Andres Lopez.

(No audible response.)
Alan Lipke.

(No audible response.)

Mii Carter.

(No audible response.)

MR. LIPKE: Sorry, I'm Alan Lipke.

MR. SIGALOS: Okay.

MR. LIPKE: I produce radio documentaries. My company is called "Listening Between the Lines." And I'd like to talk to some of the reasons why you became commissioners and why you cared to come tonight.

Some claim -- some believe that news consumers will always find suppliers to their taste. But the rule I learned in journalism graduate school, that freedom of the press belongs to he who owns one, hasn't changed.

And the Internet cannot provide an alternate source of news, since only dedicated, independent organizations can afford to investigate and report. It's a soapbox, a great soapbox, but a soapbox nonetheless.

In my lifetime, democracy has increased only through diversity of voices, increased diversity, not just ethnic diversity in U.S. newsrooms, but also in global networks serving and offering the perspectives of billions of people who don't look like me and who don't look like any of you.

So bear that in mind, that giving a
concentrated corporate media control over our public expressions, our public knowledge, our public and private culture means a tone-deaf society.

It's long been said that those who don't remember the past are doomed to repeat it. But when you deny or suppress or limit your present knowledge, you end up in an unwinnable swamp of war in the wrong country, a ruined country, this country increasingly addicted to environmental poisons.

You end up imperiled -- your liberties imperiled by secret -- secret investigations, secret courts --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. LIPKE: -- using torture to defend a corrupt economy.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. LIPKE: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Susan Haig.

MS. HAIG: My name is Susan Haig, and I'm the associate conductor of the Florida orchestra. (Applause.)

Thank you. Thank you very much, to the commission, for your work tonight.

I'd like to suggest that -- I would think that it would be important to revisit the fundamental triumvirate that we always hear that the media's responsible for news, sports
I personally think it's hard to turn the clock back on an efficiency, the efficiency that we heard described tonight. But that triumvirate, I think, is not adequate in an era of convergence.

And I--yet, in 19 years as a professional conductor, I see how hard it is for journalists to grab very integral art stories and creative ideas. Yet, it's essential.

So if there's a way to revisit that, then perhaps let's get rid of the word entertainment, which is actually a huge corporation itself, and somehow I'm sure the creativity and individuality will--(inaudible)--I think it would be extremely helpful.

We need somehow to get the dissemination of authentic ideas and creative thoughts in this world. And I think one of the biggest problems is the 24-hour distractions from the central task of creating and reaching the--creating and renewing a democratic society.

So if the commission can somehow ask, in the renewing of licenses, what the educational goals and the civic goals of the media are, I think that would help us all. Thank you very much.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

We've gone past 11 o'clock now, and so
we're going to reset the clock so that everyone will have now 90 seconds.

MS. MONTELIONE: My name is Lisa Montelione. Thank you for saying it right. Thank you for being here. Your stamina is incredible.

I'm here as a citizen. I don't have a background in broadcasting. I'm not a journalist. I just decided to come down here, because I think it's a very important issue.

I moved here 24 years ago. And I joined a local women's club to get involved in the community and get to know my neighbors. We did all the typical stuff, raising money from donations and things.

We have a local newspaper, and everyone who works at the newspaper lives in the community. I could call them up, "Come on down," and say "Do a story," and they'd run a little ad for our events.

The Tribune has purchased that newspaper. Now, to get a reporter's phone number, even, it's, you know, five or six or eight phone calls to find out who it is that's supposed to cover our area. And the person doesn't live there, and they don't -- they cover a lot of communities and don't really have an interest in any one of them.

And I think consolidation in the media is
not a good idea. The Fairness Doctrine is a
good idea. Local news I get from public
broadcasting, public radio and covering the
city and county commission hearing, meetings.
We don't get that on local news.
You don't get that on broadcast CBS, NBC,
ABC, Fox or any other channel. You have to
actually seek it out through community
sources. And if you silence those voices,
you're silencing a service to those who live
here. Thank you very much.
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
Mii Carter.
(No audible response.)
Mii Carter.
MR. CARTER: My name is Mii Carter. I
moved here in -- (Inaudible) -- milk Carter.
And I tell you find muck on the bottom of the
swamp.
I have become the only homilies man. And
I have a quick little story to tell you. My
friend told me he loaned a -- excuse me. He
had a saw. He gave it to a friend of his.
After a few years he went to borrow it. The
fellow was undiplomatic, and he said,
"Remember who owns this," in order to remind
him to bring it back.

My friend was telling me, and he smiled
and said, "It's not who owns it that is
important, it's who gets to use it."
So, if the radio and television stations,
the newspapers, etcetera, who gets to use it, the competition is rather fierce. And the question I have for you is:

How will you allocate these resources? By what means, what standards will you decide who gets to use it?

Ludwig Von Mises wrote a paper called "Economic Calculation." He predicted the demise and collapse of the Soviet Union. This paper is on an Internet website called mises.com -- M-I-S-E-S.com -- Economic Calculation in the Soviet Commonwealth.

The paper I wrote is on an Internet site that I pay less than $15 to set up. It is rkopoly.com.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. CARTER: Thank you.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Mark Wachowiak.

MR. WACHOWIAK: Hi. Good evening. It's a pleasure to be here. And thank you for giving me a minute and a half to talk to you. I'm a chef, and I drove all the way from Orlando, and I'm going to drive all the way back when this is over.

I happen to work for one of the big corporate medias. But it wasn't my choice. See, my theme-park company, they owned a few Spanish stations and some other stuff, and...
this big guy that about things to life just

came and bought us.

So I just kind of work there. (Laughter &

Applause.) I've got two things I want to say.

I oppose media corporate control and media

consolidation. And I also want to tell you l

want you to preserve neutrality.

I get my news from the net, because I

feel that corporate media is not doing its

job. It's a cheerleader for war. And it's

manufacturing consent (sic.) It seem like

Anna Nicole Smith is more important than

global warming, the Iraq War or the

Palestine-Israeli conflict.

We have a monopoly of news. We have

canned news with MPRs controlling news. We

have a lack of flavors in locality. You know,

it's -- really, the most vital job of the

corporate media is to give us the truth. And

they're not doing that job.

Recently, Somalia -- they were dropping

bombs on Somalia. Of the four corporate news

media, they spent one -- I believe it was ABC

that said something about it. So I just

really emphasize, please do not support media

consolidation. Thank you very much.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Dan Hackett (sic.)

(No audible response.)

Don Hackett.

(No audible response.)

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MR. LEVINSON: I have a question for the commissioners, and I'd like you to answer it when I'm done speaking.

Have any of the campaigns for the office of president of the United States begun in this term, or will we have to wait until we go to New Hampshire or something like that?

It's a question I'd you to answer me.

My name is Michael Levinson. This is a public forum. I declare I am a candidate for the office of President of the United States, and I'm entitled to broadcast opportunities. I have affirmed a right that was written by Justice Berger in the United States Supreme Court. You know all about it (sic.)

The issue here is Section 312.87 Telecommunications Law, which states that a candidate for elective office has the affirmative right -- that a stations can have its license revoked for the written or repeated failure to allow -- (Inaudible) -- candidate for the office of president, as you well know.

So I'm creating an earmark in 2000. And this is a "New Rule." And you can find it on msn.com. I covered the earmark in a new -- (Inaudible.) And they said that this -- this statute passed by the Congress would be amended, that all of the PBS stations are no
longer under the access law.

So if there's a candidate for federal

office, he can't go to the PBS stations and
make a -- (Inaudible) -- request for access.

Well, in this country we have a

Declaration of Independence that allows us to
dissolve a government, and we have a

Constitution that states, "Congress can make
no law to eliminate the First Amendment,
section 312.87, Telecommunications, is the
electronic extension of the access law to
every American living here.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. LEVINSON: So that's -- you people
have quietly adopted that --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. LEVINSON: -- make your ego addendum
in -- in the -- in the earmarks.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you, Mr. Levinson.

MR. LEVINSON: And you know what I'm
talking about. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Susan James.

(No audible response.)

MR. LEVINSON: That was a public
announcement I made, in a public (Inaudible)
-- recently in a -- take note of that.

MR. SIGALOS: James -- Jim Zaharis.

MR. ZAHARIS: My name is Jim Zaharis.

I'm from Tampa. I oppose the consolidation of
ownership. Rarely is bigger better. I speak
with some authority. My father owned and operated an AM-FM station in Charleston, West Virginia. I grew up in the business. I obtained my First-Class license, became a chief engineer at an AM-FM station.

We operate in a community way through a diversity of programming addressing all types of community needs. After all, it was the Commission who mandated this through license renewal.

We were only the caretakers of these frequencies. We had to prove ourselves at every license renewal. Never feared the FCC but had great respect, because I thought you-all guarded the air space for these listeners.

Now I feel like I've got to convince you that you're on our side, that you're not on the side of large corporate ownership. I don't have time to go into the exhibit that I brought.

But this is the manual, written in the 1950s, the duties of a station, how it has to meet the community's needs. Stated (sic) into the story when my father retired, he sold the stations. A large group bought them, took the AM dark -- simply brought in a satellite dish, brought in a feed for the FM. Charleston had no more rich programming. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
Would the following people come down.

Joseph Valdez, Ken Scharatt, Leonard Schmiege, Rhone Frazier, James Miller, Jean Etsinger, Joan -- Jason Polhemus, Lisa Livinggood, Frank Orlando.

Mark Skogman.

MR. SKOGMAN: You want me to speak?

MR. SIGALOS: Yes.

MR. SKOGMAN: Oh, sorry.

Commissioners of the Federal Communications Commission, thank you for coming to Tampa Bay.

My name is Mark Skogman. I'm allowed to speak with you. You're spending a lot of time. I'm very concerned about the developments of the last years in the media in the United States.

Media consolidation has been a disaster for the country, generally, and local communities specifically. I'm very concerned and angered by -- media consolidation is a terrible thing that's -- in local content, local access, public-affairs programming and in this division of fact that are important to the public, including the truth about 9/11.

What is the Federal Communications Commission thinking when they allow a company like Clear Channel to own over 1200 radio stations?

What affect has this on local programming? It's apparently eliminated it.
Think of the situations that've happened where local governments have had important emergency information for the community and could not get an employee on the telephone or at the door to -- (inaudible) -- and announcement to be made on the station.

The radio frequencies the big stations use are public property, my property. And they are not being made or being used in a way I consider close to appropriate.

Imagine the founders of our country in

the 1700's allowing one company to own 1200 printing presses, what would this have -- what effect would this have on our functioning democracy at the beginning, as we know it did.

The physical means of information dissemination cannot be controlled in this way. Let's call media consolidation what it is. This is government-enabled large media corporation corporatism.

Let us remember the famous quote from Benito Mussolini. When asked for the definition of fascism, he said that a better word for it was corporatism.

Corporatism has to stop and stop now, or we'll suffer further serious negative damage on our democracy and the world. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Joseph Valdez.

MR. VALDEZ: Yes. Hello. You know, I
heard some people here talk about the race, the Hispanic person, this and that. But I think it's even more important than race. I'm -- I'm going to just -- (Inaudible) -- going to use the race card.

So I'm just going to tell you, I'm a Cuban-American. Okay. I came here when I was six years old. My father and my mom came here to leave a dictatorship. Because they controlled the airwaves, they controlled everything.

And it's sad to say it, it's very sad for me to be here tonight to try to convince this group of people -- except for the exception of Mr. Copps, I saw you on PBS with Bill Moyers -- that we have to try to state and prove to you how big media and what they're doing and the fact that they want to buy the corporate -- corporations are buying more and big, big media, when in reality we should be having a hearing on how to roll back big media. (Applause.) Because they have not done their job.

Okay. And you people up there are supposed to represent me. I'm not a professor. I am not a media expert. I'm nothing. I'm just a citizen. Okay. And it's your responsibility to stand up for me because, according to the constitution, the citizens of the United States own the airwaves.
I don't have anyone to represent me. You do. I'll just give you a quick scenario. And you guys know about this, just because you're in the business. I'm a portrait photographer. I don't need to tell you about your business.

But -- (Inaudible) -- did a study leading up prior to the Iraq War. That's the accuracy and the democracy. And you know what, on PBS, ABC, CBS, they did almost 500 interviews, 500 broadcasts, and --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

MR. VALDEZ: -- you know what -- I'm not done yet. And you know what, three were for peace, three out of almost 500. I'm here to get --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

MR. VALDEZ: I want -- I want to get both sides of the story.

MR. SIGALOS: -- minutes.

MR. VALDEZ: Excuse me. I want --

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you very much.

MR. VALDEZ: Well, wait a minute. I'm here to give both sides of the story. Okay. I want to be -- I want the airwaves -- and I want --

MR. SIGALOS: -- give you -- you time is --

MR. VALDEZ: I want the television stations to show -- to show me both sides so
that I can make an intelligent decision. I don't want corporate American showing me one side-

MR. SIGALOS: -- Mr. Valdez --
MR. VALDEZ: -- of the issue.
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
MR. VALDEZ: You're welcome.
MR. SIGALOS: Ken Scharatt.
MR. SCHARATT: I'm here this evening to state my concerns with your commission and your inability to guide and direct and give us the airwaves that we deserve, the media that we deserve, the reporting that we deserve in a free democracy.

You're not doing your job. And the only way I can see where this is going to end is that we're going to have to go, and there's going to have to be a huge litigation done against this organization, because you're not doing your job. You've sold out. You've sold your souls.

A VOICE: -- class action suit.
MR. SCHARATT: A class action suit is what is needed in this country to take and bring back the power to the people. Thank you. (Applause.)
MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
Leonard Schmiege.
MR. SCHMIEGE: Schmiege.
Hello. Good evening. My name's Leonard Schmiege. I was forced to become an

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independent journalist, video journalist.

When I found that the mainstream press refused to provide adequate coverage, I started investigating election fraud and voting machines that could have become manipulated, because they build -- my company builds computer control systems with touch screens (sic.)

Do not trust your vote to an electronic voting machine. (Applause.) I covered with the -- (Inaudible) -- District 13 race with a GE. We broke down their videotaping, because the news only shows up for two seconds, gets the bite it needs.

But we drew up a full story. Go to shadowvote.org. There's two 30-minute videos on there that show you exactly what a catastrophe our elections processes are (Applause.)

But the media doesn't want you to know that. They want the status quo, the illusion that is everything is going just fine. They never do an investigation.

I pulled a bag of shredded ballots out of the dumpster behind Deborah Clark's office, the supervisor of elections in Pinellas County. And I called the St. Petersburg Times, and I said, "I got this bag of shredded ballots here. You don't want to come check it out."
You know what they said, "We're not going on a witch hunt for Deborah Clark."

I said, "Who said anything about a witch hunt. I thought you were just going to try to find out what was the cause of the shredded ballots."

Now, it turns out those shredded ballots were duplicates, illegally disposed of, but not quite as bad as -- as who's -- (Inaudible) -- the original vote.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

MR. SCHMIEGE: Listen to Democracy Now if you want to get the truth about what's happening in this country. (Applause.) Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Rhone Frazer.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: James Miller.

MR. MILLER: Good evening. You've heard an expression of "Thanks for being here." And I think you should thank us for what you have heard today. That should be your gratitude that you ought to express when you go back to Washington.

I'm a board member of an organization called the Florida Coalition for Peace and Justice. (Applause.) It's a mission -- we have a mission to transform this culture of militarism, greed, violence, materialism to one of equality, mutual responsibility and
bring it back to democratic principles.
I was hearing the questions (sic.) And
that's it. What do you think accounts for the
great draw of John Stewart in the evening?

Were the early fathers of this country,
Ben Franklin and others who risked the
printing of leaflets opposing, would they be
proud or what you do and your work?
Are you proud of what your children,
maybe your parents, your grandparents, see and
hear?

Do you think there's any direct
connection between the rush to media
consolidation and a dumbing-down of America?
And, finally, you're either part of the
solution or you are part of the problem.
Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

JEAN ETSINGER: You got it right. Thank you.

I'm a career journalist and newspaper
editor. I've also been a volunteer for many
not-for-profits raising funds for friends. I
found it amazing we had so many testimonials
earlier today from such agencies lauding area
media outlets for their support; however,
although this may sound cruel, a news media
ought not to be judged in the community it
serves, by the fundraisers it sponsors or by its collection of Christmas Toys for Tots or clothing for hurricane victims. And I speak as both a hurricane victim and a volunteer. Because this is not the mandate of the news media.

The mandate in a democracy, such as ours, is to provide information to the public, collectively, so that people, individually, can make informed decisions about everything that affects their lives.

We are told that newspapers are dying. We have heard here today the argument that convergence is critical. We're keeping our newspapers on artificial life support.

But the airwaves are a special case, a public domain. My view is that the future of newspapers will ride on better local community coverage and local community access. Get back to the broadcast.

On the island of St. Thomas, where I lived before I moved to Sarasota, there's a population of 50,000 people. There are two radio stations that have full-time professional news staffs. It's amazing.

In the St. Thomas -- in the Sarasota metro area of a half a million people, guess what, there are two stations with news departments, and one of them is paid, the other's volunteers.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
MS. ETSINGER: Thank you.

Jason Polhemus.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Lisa Livinggood.

MS. LIVINGGOOD: I apologize, 'cause I won't -- probably won't be as eloquent as I would like to be. I've very tired today and tonight (sic.)

My background, I graduated, PBA (sic) with a degree in economics. And I graduated from American University with a MIS in international service. I've spent six years in radio and television and eleven years in the United States military.

The first three things that I want to ask you is 1) to reject the consolidation of media, 2) to reinstate the Fairness Doctrine, and 3) to promote increase local and independent media.

But I ask you this for different reasons than those that were stated here tonight. The reasons I ask you for this is because you have the opportunity to impact not only the freedom of speech in the United States, but also for the future of global media.

The decisions that you make impact the likelihood that the United States will continue to be hated in other countries. What most people don't recognize is that our media is read and understood.
Fox News is broadcast all over the Middle East. And when a reverend says that Muslims are satanists and that the reason that the earthquake hit Pakistan and 30 million people died is because they are satanic. But that directly impacts back on our country in the United States.

So the Fairness Doctrine is critical. And it is your responsibility to look after to not only the United States' welfare, the Constitution but the -- (Inaudible) -- as well. And I ask you to uphold your responsibility. Thank you very much.

(Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Would the following five people and the following final people come to the mike.

Michelle Kenoyer, Jarvis El-Amin, Hakim Aquil, Ahmed Bedier, Barbara Fite.

And right now if Frank Orlando would come forward.

MR. ORLANDO: Hello. My name is Frank Orlando. And my job doesn't provide me with the abilities to afford cable or satellite radio.

My job does provide with authority to spend 50 hours listening to music and seeing Tampa and the Orlando music markets. And when the -- when Clear Channel incorporated eight radio stations into one building, you could dramatically see the level of programming
significantly dropped.
And you -- examples of news broadcasts from one radio station being combined and that, like, when I went over to drive over to Orlando, which is a completely different market, the rock station there and the rock station in Tampa was doing the same morning program.

And the DJ -- we used to have a local Tampa DJ, and they would go to different night spots, and they make themselves publicly (sic), and they communicated with local musicians. And now with these syndications, it makes it difficult for a particular DJ to put his energy and his staff into that community.

So that's just one of my personal concerns about consolidation. And I have more, but that's -- that's all. I'll leave it at that.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Michelle Kenoyer.

MS. KENOYER: Thank you, Commissioners, for staying late to hear all of us. While I'm now a Tampa area resident, I'm not originally from Florida. And I've previously lived in diverse regions of the U.S., both culturally and politically.
The mainstream media outlets in Tampa-St. Pete, however, by-and-large do not
reflect, cater to or serve the needs and
ingterests of the Tampa Bay Area's diverse
citizenry; in fact, most of the

Tampa-St. Pete's radio and TV networks present
news and opinions with a decidedly right-wing
bias, masquerading as balance and knowledge of
power. I witnessed close family members alter
t heir opinions of government, war and our
fellow Americans as a result of what they have
seen on O'Reilly or heard on Sean Hannity's
show.

As a taxpaying homeowner in the Tampa Bay
Area, I find it unsettling that large
corporations can have so much impact over
what we listen to and watch and what we make
of this information.

Consolidated, unregulated media ownership
is harmful in a democracy, if this information
is controlled and contrived by an elite few.
Because what we see and hear over our public
airwaves -- airwaves can influence elections,
overturn laws, threaten civil rights and start
wars.

I implore the Commission to do what it
can to reverse the negative impact of media
consolidation and restore openness to our
once-free airwaves that belong to all of us.
Thank you. (Applause.)

Thank you. (Applause.)

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.
MR. SIGALOS: Hakim Aquil.

MR. SIGALOS: Ahmed Bedier.

MR. BEDIER: Good evening. My name's Ahmed Bedier. I'm the executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, a Muslim civil rights group.

And my -- (Inaudible) -- is to help us stop big media from doing three things: Disseminating trash over our airwaves, disseminating political propaganda and hate speech.

And as for most of us living in this country, the lies and hate speech directed at our community post 9/11 is unacceptable. Some have compared it to Nazi propaganda against Jews during World War II, where there were more and more voices over the airwaves, conservative right-wingers are constantly attacking Muslims, inciting hatred against our community and putting the lives of other Americans that just happen to be practicing a different faith in jeopardy, people like Neal Boortz saying that Islam is a cancel, and it needs to be uprooted; people like Glenn Beck who said that Muslims will see the west through razor wires, meaning -- in internment camps of Muslims and then had the audacity to use the airwaves to question the loyalty of...
the first Muslim elected to Congress, questioning him, "Prove to me, sir, you don't work for the enemy."

That's ridiculous. That's unacceptable.

I can't even turn on the radio or turn on the television when my kids are up, my two children, because I'm afraid that they'll feel like victims all their lives.

And every time they turn on the television, they hear that Islams, Muslims are terrorists, Muslims are violent, that Islam is inherently violent. That's unacceptable.

It's got to stop.

And when we try to reach out, we do -- we only find obstacles. It's your job to defend this Constitution and the airwaves. Help us do that. Thank you.

MR. SIGALOS: Thank you.

Barbara Fite.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Barbara Fite.

(No audible response.)

MR. SIGALOS: Ladies and gentlemen, this concludes the Commission's fourth hearing on media ownership.

On behalf of the Federal Communications Commission, I would like to thank so very much for your attendance and for your participation.

Good night.
WHEREUPON, at 11:33 p.m., the proceedings were adjourned.

COURT REPORTER’S CERTIFICATE

STATE OF FLORIDA:
COUNTY OF HILLSBOROUGH:

I, ELIDA T. HAGER, Registered Professional Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of Florida at large, hereby certify that the hearing was recorded in Stenotypy by me and that the foregoing pages constitute a true and correct transcription of my recordings thereof to be best of my skill and ability.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am neither an attorney nor of counsel for the parties to this cause nor a relative or employee of any attorney or party connected with this litigation and that I have no interest in the outcome of this action.

WITNESS WHEREOF my hand and seal this 22nd of May 2007, at Tampa, Hillsborough County,
Florida.

ELIDA T. HAGER, R.P.R.
Notary Public
State of Florida
My Commission Expires 1/7/2008
Commission No. DD279405