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Media Access Project issued the following statement on initiatives FCC Chairman Powell announced on Wednesday, August 20. (MAP has also issued a separate, more detailed statement on the low power FM radio issues Chairman Powell addressed.)

Chairman Powell couldn't ignore the public outcry any longer. As a result, he is taking some very welcome steps, none of which offer the slightest reason to change our complete opposition to his June 2 decision decimating the FCC's media ownership policies.

We certainly applaud the Chairman's efforts to expedite the creation of more low power FM stations. Now that the Congressionally-mandated engineering study has vindicated what low power advocates have said for years, it is high time for the Commission to break up the logjam of existing applications and start the process of expanding the low power service.

On the other hand, Chairman Powell can't justify his actions lifting the FCC's ownership rules by starting a new study to find out why broadcasters aren't doing what they are already required to do. New requirements are worthy of discussion, but we don't need a task force to know that the FCC isn't enforcing rules which are already on the books

The value of the new localism task force is fatally undermined by Chairman Powell's refusal to stay the effectiveness of the ownership rules, now scheduled to go into effect on September 4. Just this week, MAP filed a request for such a stay on behalf of the Parents TV Council, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, Consumers Union, the Communications Workers of America and Capitol Broadcasting Co.

The idea that ownership rules are unrelated to localism is absurd. Companies like Clear Channel and Sinclair Broadcasting have already exploited prior rule changes to eliminate locally originated news programming in favor of fake local newscasts beamed from thousands of miles away.

Here are some other things to remember about localism.

Existing law is more than sufficient to make sure that Clear Channel and Infinity can't refuse to sell time to California gubernatorial candidates.

The FCC has callously ignored local TV stations' demands that the FCC stop the networks from ignoring the affiliation rules which were adopted for the very purpose of protecting localism.

The FCC's three year-old digital TV docket is overflowing with recommendations on how the FCC can and should require coverage of local news and insure that every station provides at least some locally originated programming.

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