

 [Click to Print](#)

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Minority concerns fuel push to delay FCC consolidation vote

Some fear media consolidation would squeeze out woman, minority owners.

 [Click-2-Listen](#)

By [Whitney Boyd](#)

WASHINGTON BUREAU

Wednesday, December 05, 2007

WASHINGTON — The Senate Commerce Committee passed a bipartisan bill Tuesday that would delay a December vote by the Federal Communications Commission on allowing media companies to control more outlets in a city.

With the FCC moving quickly toward a vote expected to be in favor of such consolidation, black and Hispanic groups are warning that their voices are in danger of being muffled.

These groups and other opponents of loosening media ownership rules are expected to support a delay of the upcoming vote at a hearing before the committee today. Many argue that the new policies would allow big media companies to get even bigger, squeezing out space for minority and woman ownership in local media markets.

The Senate bill, co-sponsored by Sen. Byron Dorgan, D-N.D., and Sen. Trent Lott, R-Miss., would direct the FCC to conduct a separate proceeding on localism and create an independent minority and female ownership task force before moving forward with any changes to media ownership limits. The bill would also give the public a 90-day comment period on any proposed rules.

A legislative aide to Dorgan said the senator hopes the full Senate will approve the measure before Christmas.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson's Rainbow PUSH Coalition and some other minority groups advocated this idea in a Nov. 1 letter to the FCC's chairman, Kevin Martin.

Andrew Schwartzman, one of twelve panelists scheduled to testify before the subcommittee today, said that loosening current rules would hurt minority media ownership. As president and CEO of Media Access Project, a media advocacy group based in Washington, D.C., Schwartzman said the new rules are vaguely packaged and the public is unaware of the significance of the changes.

"These rules appear more benign than what they really are," Schwartzman said. "The FCC has portrayed it as a modest change when in fact it is a very major change."

The law now prohibits a major radio or television broadcaster from owning the major daily newspaper in the same

community and bans a single company from owning two television stations in the same market.

Proposed regulations would lift this long-standing ban, allowing broadcasters to own the major newspaper and broadcast stations in certain cities by the end of the year.


Despite the outcry from opponents of such consolidation, Martin and other media conglomerates say current media-ownership policies are an anachronism in a time of dwindling newspaper readership and businesses.

Many lawmakers agree that more studies need to be done before new rules are implemented, noting the low proportion of minority and woman media ownership.

According to a 2007 study released by Free Press, of the 1,349 full-power commercial television stations in the United States, 1,296 are white-owned.

Find this article at:

<http://www.statesman.com/search/content/business/stories/other/12/05/1205minorities.html>

 **Click to Print**

[SAVE THIS](#) | [EMAIL THIS](#) | [Close](#)

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.