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For Immediate Release



FCC Relaxation of Broadcast Ownership Limits Would Harm Public Interest

WASHINGTON -- Andrew Jay Schwartzman, President and CEO of Media Access Project, issued the following statement concerning today's FCC decision substantially relaxing rules limiting common ownership of newspapers and broadcast properties in the same city:

"Today's action is far more radical, and much more outrageous, than what Chairman Martin proposed just a few weeks ago. He has caved in to lobbying from the media giants, giving a pass to them so they can retain TV and radio stations that they were supposed to have divested months and years ago. And he is even giving Rupert Murdoch a new crack at keeping two huge TV stations in New York, despite his acquisition of the Wall Street Journal."

"It is hard to understand why the Chairman has been so stubborn about pushing through such an extreme and unjustified change in rules which have long protected the public's right to have access to diverse sources of sources of information."

"Unfortunately, unless Congress intercedes, we're going to have to go back to court to make sure the public isn't harmed by this ill-advised action."

"Contrary to what Chairman Martin has said, in rejecting the FCC's previous effort to change these rules, the U.S. Court of Appeals did NOT approve their repeal. Based on the record which has been developed over the last year, citizens groups have proven that the existing rule is fully justified and necessary to protect the public interest."

"Nor are we mollified by the fact that the changes are not as extreme as what the FCC attempted to do in 2003 or by the FCC's long overdue initiative to make broadcasters more responsive to their communities. None of those concessions make up for the loss of diversity which would be caused by the changes adopted today."

Media Access Project represented Prometheus Radio Project and other public interest groups in challenging the FCC's June, 2003 deregulation decision in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit in Philadelphia. That court issued a stay in September, 2003 which directs the FCC to keep its prior rules in place, and then reversed the FCC's decision in an opinion issued in June, 2004. That stay remains in effect.

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Media Access Project (MAP) is a non-profit advocacy organization dedicated to promoting the public's First Amendment right to access a diverse marketplace of ideas in the electronic mass media of today and tomorrow. For over 35 years, MAP has promoted the public interest before the FCC and the Courts, advocating for an open and diverse media that protects the free flow of information, promotes universal and equitable access, and encourages vibrant public discourse on critical issues facing our society. For more information please visit our website at www.mediaaccess.org.