



**September 14, 2006**  
For Immediate Release

Media Access Project issues the following statement in response to a news report indicating that former FCC Chairman Michael Powell ordered the destruction of a FCC report supporting stricter media ownership limits.

In a USA Today Op Ed in 2003 on the FCC's media ownership proceeding, then-Chairman Powell accused opponents of "substituting personal ideology for and opinion for the facts." According to the Associated Press, however, when a study Powell ordered to prove deregulation did not hurt local news coverage proved the opposite, Powell ordered the study not merely suppressed, but destroyed.

"It appears that it was Michael Powell, not the public, who preferred to make decisions based on 'personal ideology,'" said Harold Feld, Senior Vice President, Media Access Project.

Powell allegedly ordered the study to counter mounting evidence in the FCC's 2003 "localism proceeding," showing that relaxing ownership regulation hurt local news. But the study showed just the opposite, proving the need for maintaining ownership limits rather than relaxing them.

There is no evidence that the FCC's current Chairman, Kevin Martin, ever knew of this report – let alone participated in Powell's effort to destroy it. Furthermore, Chairman Martin has shown a commendable willingness to open the ownership process to the public by committing to holding six public hearings outside of Washington DC. At his confirmation hearing for another term yesterday, Chairman Martin confessed that he was no longer "comfortable" with the FCC's decision to deregulate in 2003, and pledged to approach the new ownership proceeding with an "open mind."

Nevertheless, the public deserves to know the truth about whether Martin's predecessor tried to destroy valuable evidence about the most critical question facing the FCC then or now. We join with Free Press, Consumers Union, and Consumer Federation of America in calling on Chairman Martin to set up an independent investigation into today's allegations.

Michael Powell was absolutely right when he said we need to decide this issue on the basis of facts, not personal ideologies. Unlike Powell, we hope that Chairman Martin will share those facts with the public, no matter what they prove.

Media Access Project is a public interest law firm which served as counsel to the Philadelphia-based Prometheus Radio Project in its successful appeal of the FCC's June, 2003 media ownership decision.

30/30/30

Contact: Harold Feld  
Senior Vice President  
(202) 454 - 5684  
hfeld@mediaaccess.org

Parul Desai  
Assistant Director  
(202) 454 - 5686  
pdesai@mediaaccess.org