many local stations are affiliated with networks. As a result, even though these stations are not commonly owned, they air the identical programming for a large portion of the broadcast day irrespective of the national ownership limits.

For these reasons, the amendment proposed by Mr. MARKEY is anticompetitive and I strongly urge my colleagues to oppose his amendment.

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Maryland [Mr. WYNN].

Mr. WYNN. Mr. Chairman, it goes without saying that media is a major force in our society. Some people even blame our crime problems, our moral decay on the media. Now, I am not willing to go that far, but I am concerned about putting the control of our ideas and messages in the hands of fewer and fewer people in this country.

Right now the national audience capture is 25 percent. That seems appropriate to me in light of the fact that there is no network that reaches 25 percent, but certainly 35 percent is a reasonable compromise. There is no reason to double the concentration to 50 percent. I think 35 percent is certainly appropriate.

We talk about small business. Mr. Chairman, this bill goes in the exact opposite direction. Even big businesses may not be able to get into the market if we pass this legislation. It is clearly a barrier to market interests. In fact, 10 years ago if this bill had been in place Fox television probably could not have gotten started. It represents a threat to local broadcast decisions. Please vote with the Markey amendment.

Mr. FIELDS of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida [Mr. STEARNS].

(Mr. STEARNS asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. STEARNS. Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong opposition to the Markey amendment.

The rules regulating broadcasters were written in the 1950's. but the world for which those broadcast provisions were necessary doesn't exist anymore. It's gone. Most of us have recognized that fact and bidden it a fond farewell.

But not the supporters of this amendment. They would take the U.S. broadcasting industry back to the days of the 1950's. This amendment would ensure that while every other industry in America surges ahead, U.S. broadcasters remain mired in rules written when the slide rule was still state-of-the-art technology.

We should be thankful that we didn't impose the same regulations on the computer industry as we have on the broadcast industry. If we had, we'd all still be using mechanical typewriters.

The Markey amendment is the equivalent of trying to stuff a full-grown man into boys clothes—they simply won't fit anymore. The broadcast industry has outgrown the rules written for it when it was still a child.

If I could direct your attention to the graph, you will see that to reach that 50 percent limit, one would have to buy a station in more than each of the top 25 markets out of the 211 television markets. That in itself is no small feat. But keep in mind the result: Broadcasters would own a mere 30 stations out of the 1,500 TV stations nationwide. Who has this money, the financing, for that would be mind boggling.

On the question of localism—it isn't lost. Networks and group-owned stations typically air more local coverage. Covering local news simply makes good business sense—give viewers what they want or go out of business. Business succeed by making people satisfied.

Opponents will also tell you we will lose diversity in the local market with this bill. That is simply not true. Just keep in mind the following:

The FCC can deny any combination if it will harm the preservation of diversity in the local market; and under no circumstance will the FCC allow less than three voices in a market.

We must reject this backward-looking amendment. We must reject the advice of the Rip Van Winkles of broadcasting who went to sleep in the 1950's and think we are still there.

If the supporters of this amendment had their way, smoke signals would still be cutting-edge technology.

The dire predictions about the harm of lifting broadcast restrictions remind me of Chicken Little's warning that the sky is falling. Ladies and gentlemen, the sky is not falling. Freeing broadcasters from outdated ownership rules will do us no harm. If I can steal from Shakespeare, the Markey amendment is ''full of sound and fury, signifying nothing.''

Mr. MARKEY. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Pittsburgh, PA [Mr. KLINK].

Mr. KLINK. Mr. Chairman, the Markey amendment is really very important to this bill. I will tell you that for us to have a free Nation, for people who are going to elect those of us who are their representatives in Government, they have to have different points of views.

I have had some experience in the broadcast industry for 24 years, and in fact I worked for Westinghouse, which is one of the companies who just this last week made national history in buying CBS, ABC is being bought by Disney.

I am talking to my colleagues in the business. They said, look, we are already merging news rooms. You have four or five different entities, radio and TV owned by Westinghouse and by CBS, we are merging news rooms, so before as a Member of Congress or as any public servant you may have three or four different people there gathering points of view you now have one.

So this is not a divergence of viewpoints. We are bringing all the viewpoints in there. We are creating information czars. We are creating a situation where a handful of people will in fact be able to control the opinions across this Nation, and what we are saying is, no, we do not want that, we want free broadcast, we want the broadcast signals which are owned by the people of this Nation, which are licensed by the FCC for these large corporations to broadcast on to continue.

I urge you to support the Markey amendment.

Mr. FIELDS of Texas. Mr. Chairman, I yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from New York [Mr. PAXON].

Mr. PAXON. Mr. Chairman, one of the major fallacies of Mr. MARKEY's arguments is that the broadcast ownership reform provisions will harm local ownership of broadcast stations.

There is an unfounded fear that networks or broadcasting groups will buy up local stations and drop local programming in favor of network programs or a bland, national fare—and that is just plain wrong.

First, under today's restrictive broadcast ownership provisions, 75 percent of television stations are owned by broadcast corporations, and of those companies, 90 percent are headquartered in States other than where their individual stations are located.

Second, networks cannot currently force an affiliate to air any specific network program. Local stations today enjoy the ''right of refusal'' which means they can air a local program instead of a network program. Nothing in H.R. 1555 will change this right of refusal.

Finally, and perhaps most important to broadcasters, is the fact that local programming is profitable. Good business sense dictates that broadcasters address the needs of the local community.

There will always be demand for local programming, especially local news, weather forecasts and traffic reports, since this is something that the networks just can't match.

In conclusion, we must also remember that H.R. 1555 does nothing to weaken existing antitrust laws regarding undue media concentration.

Mr. Chairman, I urge all of my colleagues to oppose the amendment by Mr. Markey.

The CHAIRMAN. The Committee will rise informally to receive a message.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. WALKER) assumed the chair.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair will receive a message.

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Mr. Edwin Thomas, one of his secretaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.