

warfare, and they declared war on the very survival of these families who are working at the margins. We see them every day. These are people who work hard in difficult jobs, in jobs that most people do not want. They get up and they ride transit, and they go to work and they work and they work and they come home, and at the end of the year they continue to be poor.

Past Congresses gave them the child tax credit, and this year when we decided we would give an increase in the child tax credit, we did not decide. The Republicans decided in the back rooms, they decided they would declare their own private war, their own private class warfare on these individuals. They decided to do it on the last night, in the back room, with the lights turned out and with Vice President CHENEY casting the deciding vote, who now declares he is ignorant on this. Then how did he vote for it? How did he vote for it?

Class warfare, the most mean-spirited, the most greedy action of class warfare we have seen was just committed by the Republican Party in the tax bill against struggling, working, lower-income families in this country.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. DAVIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. DAVIS of Illinois addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

RESTRICTION OF CIVIC PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEDIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from New York (Mr. HINCHEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. HINCHEY. Mr. Speaker, the Federal Communications Commission today struck a very hard and damaging blow against democracy. They did so in a very close four to three ruling that will allow media corporations to own more and more of the public information distribution system that we all rely upon for the information upon which we base our civic decisions, the information upon which we base our votes for Members of Congress and for other offices all across the country.

What is happening here? Why is it that the Republicans in the Federal Communications Commission are voting to restrict the voice of the American people while the Democrats are opposed to it? This is an issue that has been going on in this country now for almost three decades.

In 1987, the Federal Communications Commission of Ronald Reagan stripped the fairness doctrine or the equal access clause from the FCC rules. The fairness doctrine was a simple provision that was placed in the FCC rules early on in the 1930s. It stipulates that if someone who owns a broadcast station, then a radio station, but now radio or television, has a political opinion and they express it editorially they

have to provide for an alternative opinion by others in that community who may feel differently. That was stricken in 1987.

In 1996, the Telecommunications Act was passed, fashioned by the Republican majority in this House, which gave rise to the commission decision today to restrict civic public access to the media and allow it to be controlled by an increasingly smaller number of people, a handful of people.

This is damaging and dangerous to every democratic principle. It is damaging and dangerous to the future of this democratic republic.

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Countries and governments such as ours, free countries, rely upon the open, free exchange of information. If you have a handful of people controlling the way information is distributed, you are not going to have a free and open exchange. That is dangerous to our country.

What did the ruling do today? Under the new rules, a national television network may now acquire dozens of local broadcast stations and control up to 90 percent of the national television market. A single corporation may now acquire, in one city, up to three television stations, eight radio stations, the cable television system, numerous cable television stations, and the daily newspaper as well. No diversity. No contrary opinion. One voice speaking to the public in community after community after community across this country.

When the Federal Communications Commission was established by this Congress, it was established in order to require that there be diversity and that the American people have access to the airwaves, which they own. The airwaves are owned by all the American people; they are not owned by one corporation or several corporations. Those corporations only lease them for periods of time. We need to return to a system where the American people have access to the means of communication in our Nation.

If we are going to preserve this democratic Republic, if we are going to save the essence of American democracy, we are going to have to have the opportunity to discuss different opinions on important political social issues, whether they are foreign or domestic, in the open so that everybody has a chance to have their voice heard. Not just the elite, not just the big corporations, not just the people with all the money and the power.

What is going on here? Why is there this connection and relationship between the Republican Party establishment here in Washington and the media corporations across the country? Republicans out there do not want to see this happen, groups as diverse as the National Consumer Network, the National Rifle Association, the Catholic Bishops, and a host of others have come out against this recent Federal

Communication decision. The people of this country, whether they are Republicans or Democrats, are opposed to it; but the Republican establishment here in Washington is creating a situation where people do not have access to their own airwaves, do not have access to their own media.

We are introducing legislation that is going to put a stop to this and reverse what has been going on now since at least 1987; and the sooner that legislation is passed, the sooner the American democracy will be saved.

FCC'S VOTE ON MEDIA OWNERSHIP RULES

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. SOLIS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. SOLIS. Mr. Speaker, tonight I rise also to express my strong opposition to the recent vote that was taken today by the FCC. The three-two vote by the commission will allow for the concentration of media ownership in the hands of the very few and privileged and will reduce the diversity of viewpoints. This does not sound too American to me.

The decades-old rules that will be altered under today's vote were intended to provide for multiple media owners and voices in our market. Today's vote that was taken will reduce the assortment of voices and opinions that are essential to our healthy democracy. Allowing one company in a city to control the most popular newspaper and TV station will give the company excessive control over the local news and the information that the public sees and hears. It would also reduce the diversity of cultural and political disclosure in our communities.

Studies that I have seen indicate that, under these rules, mergers will be allowed in 140 local concentrated markets. In as many as 100 of these local markets, representing nearly half of the national population, there will probably be one dominant newspaper. A merger between a dominant newspaper and a large TV station would create a local news giant that would threaten alternative views and news.

Today's decision will have a detrimental impact on minority communities, including the Nation's fast-growing Latino population, the Spanish-language population. It will dramatically reduce competition in Spanish-language media and opportunities for Latino media ownership. Dominance in the Spanish-language media by one corporation can have the same negative effects for many Latinos as the dominance of English-language media can have for the general population.

Today's ruling by the FCC means less diverse programming, news sources, and smaller points of view. We need to look only at the radio industry to see the ill effects that today's vote will have on the diversity in media.