

given us the highest quality of health in the history of man; but at the same time, there is a limit to how much they can expect out of our veins as far as the price of pharmaceutical products, especially when we know those products are being sold for a lot less elsewhere. This fight is not going to end until we obtain victory.

I want to tell them there are a lot of people here, besides those tonight, who are committed to making sure that we get these prices of pharmaceutical products down to a level that is acceptable for the American people, as they are in other parts of the world. No matter how much money the pharmaceutical companies spend or PhRMA spends, they ain't going to win this battle.

So I think they need to get with the program instead of trying to stop Niagara Falls with a sieve. It is not going to work. I think Lincoln said it the best. He said, "You can fool all of the people some of the time and some of the people all of the time, but you cannot fool all the people all the time," and this is so transparent the American people are going to get it and they are going to get it very quickly.

I now yield to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. GUTKNECHT).

Mr. GUTKNECHT. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman quoted one of my favorite Presidents. Let me quote another one. Ronald Reagan said, "Markets are more powerful than armies." This idea that American consumers should be charged \$360 for these pills when we can buy them in Munich, Germany, at the airport pharmacy for \$59.05.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. One-sixth.

Mr. GUTKNECHT. One-sixth. That will not stand. That is defending the indefensible, and sooner or later, it may not happen this year, may not happen next year, but sooner or later this wall will collapse just like the walls of Jericho.

I want to thank the gentleman for his leadership, and I want to thank my colleagues on both sides of the aisle. As I said at the beginning, this is not a matter of right versus left. This is right versus wrong. This is wrong, and we should do something to stop it.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I thank my colleagues, and we will be taking special orders in the future. I hope they will join with me when we do that, and I look forward to even the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN), if he has the time, to come to our hearing, which is a week from Thursday, because it is going to be a very important hearing on this entire subject.

CONCENTRATION OF OWNERSHIP IN MEDIA

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. CHOCOLA). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, the issue that we are now going to be dis-

cussing, which is the concentration of ownership in the media and the implication of more media deregulation as proposed by the Bush administration and passed today by a three to two vote by the Federal Communications Commission, the FCC, is, to my mind, one of the very most important issues facing our country.

The reason for that is very clear. Today, we have a handful of very large corporations who, to a very significant degree, control what we see, hear and read; and I think this chart tells the story, and it is a story that not a lot of Americans are totally familiar with.

When people watch television they say, well, there is CBS, there is a company called CBS. Wrong. CBS is owned by Viacom, and Viacom owns not only the CBS network but UPN Network, MTV, Nickelodeon and many other television networks. Viacom owns Paramount Pictures, MTV Films, Nickelodeon Films. They own Simon & Schuster, Nickelodeon Books, Pocket Books, Scribner, Touchstone, heavy into publishing.

Viacom owns not only television and film and book publishing, they own 180 Infinity radio stations; they own television stations. And that is the same story that we see with all of the major media conglomerates, whether it is AOL Time Warner, which is heavy into the Internet, cable TV, TV networks; whether it is Rupert Murdoch's news corporation, owning 22 TV stations, owning Fox, owning various other types of publications. Clear Channel radio now owns 1,200 radio stations. Disney, that is the Mickey Mouse company, owns ABC; they own many, many other aspects of media.

And as bad as the situation is today with a handful, it is likely to become much worse as a result of the disastrous decision, three-to-two vote, by the FCC earlier today.

In terms of national concentration as a result of this vote, a national television network, we believe, may now be able to acquire dozens of lawful broadcaster stations and control up to 90 percent of the national television market. As a result of the decision today, as we understand it, a single corporation may now acquire in one city up to three television station, eight radio stations, the cable TV system, numerous cable TV stations and the only daily newspaper.

I come from a rural State, the State of Vermont, and what we are going to see in rural America, in small city after small city, town after town, is one company owning the radio station, the television station and the newspaper; and that does not to me seem and feel like the democratic Nation that we are supposed to be, because what democracy is about and what the framers of our Constitution had in mind is a strong First Amendment, a country where people had different ideas, and those ideas clashed, and we learned from the differing points of view.

Today, increasingly, we are hearing one point of view, and that is the corporate point of view, the point of view of large multinational corporations like General Electric who owns NBC or Disney who owns ABC, who have deeply vested conflicts of interest; and we will talk more about that later.

The key issue here is, do we think it is a healthy situation for a democracy to have a handful of huge, multibillion dollar conglomerates owning and controlling what the American people see, hear and read. I think it is not healthy.

There are many conservative organizations who, like the National Rifle Association, spoke out against it; Bill Safire, conservative columnist for New York Times; TRENT LOTT, conservative Senator, spoke out against it. Progressives, moderates, conservatives understand and appreciate that democracy is not about a handful of corporations controlling the media.

I am now pleased to yield to the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN), and I want to thank him for all of his good work on this issue.

Mr. ALLEN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I am pleased to be here tonight.

This was a very important decision that the FCC made today on a three-to-two party line vote, and I found one of the significant aspects of the decision was that it was made in spite of what the newspaper says is 500,000 comments in opposition, and it would have been fairly simple for the FCC to agree to hold a hearing, absolutely just to have a hearing so that people could speak out in public. But that is not way the chairman, Mr. Powell, decided to proceed. He wanted this over and done as quickly as possible so that it did not become an issue.

It has not become a major issue in the major networks. I wonder why. Could it be that perhaps all those broadcasters, who pride themselves on their independence, are a little uneasy about telling a story that might be critical of their ownership? There is, as my colleague mentioned, increasing concentration in the major news organizations.

It was just 1996 when the Telecommunications Act was passed. If we added together the two largest groups of owners of radio stations in the country, their collective ownership would come to, I think it was something like 214. I may have that a little wrong. That may be too high, but no more than 214 radio stations across the country. Today, Clear Channel alone owns 1,200 radio stations, and yesterday and Saturday evening Garrison Keillor on Public Radio had a comment about this.

He was doing a little skit there, talking with someone who appeared to be complaining about Clear Channel Communications and changing over a local broadcast channel to Clear Channel. And he said, Look, Clear Channel owns 1,200 radio stations in this country; we cannot expect them to have a human being in every single radio station.

That is the point. Those who have been advocating this, like Mr. Powell at the FCC, would say, Well, there will be inefficiencies of scale. There will be inefficiencies, and it will jeopardize the ability of small businesses to start up, to own radio stations.

□ 2130

It will jeopardize the ability of people in a local area to hear local news, not something that is canned, prerecorded, from somewhere else in the country. This decision is basically starting to strangle the diversity of opinion that is fundamental to a democracy. It is ultimately a very dangerous decision; and we in the Congress, Republicans and Democrats, need to stand up and say that at the core of this democracy, what makes it work is diversity of opinion.

Thomas Jefferson said a long time ago, if I were given a choice between having newspapers and no government, or government and no newspapers, I should not hesitate to choose newspapers and no government. Obviously, we need both; but the media is, in all of its different forms today, absolutely fundamental to the health of this democracy. And with this decision today, the FCC has made our democracy weaker. It is a bad decision, and the Congress should reverse it.

Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for giving me this time.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam Speaker, the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. BROWN) has long been involved in this issue, and we are pleased to have him with us this evening.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Madam Speaker, I thank my colleague, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS), on his leadership, his unparalleled leadership here in the Congress on the issue of a fair media, a diverse media with diverse programming, and a competitive media where a small number of large corporations do not make the decisions about information that the public and our country sees and hears.

As the gentleman from Maine (Mr. ALLEN) said, it was a 3-2 party line decision, similar to so much of what has happened from the Supreme Court in the year 2000 Presidential election, to vote after vote in this body. The Bush administration, the Bush Federal Communication Commission has thrown sound public interest and market principles out the window, allowing America's biggest companies to decide what you hear, when you hear it, what you see, and, in some ways, what you think.

Without a doubt, when you look at the kind of response that the FCC got to this issue, you can see that it really was back-room politics at its worst, as the gentleman from Maine mentioned, 500,000 postcards and e-mail messages almost uniformly against this rule change. A number of comments were examined by a group, a group called the Future of Music Coalition, a group representing artists from country

music to rock and roll, artists that almost everyone in this country listens to. They released a report after examining 10,000 comments at random from the FCC that were made public on its Web site; and 9,065 of these 10,000, unaffiliated with any corporate media these 10,000, and 9,065 said they were opposed to changing the resume. Only 11 individuals wrote in support of the FCC.

So on one side there were 9,065; on the other side 11 people. It was a ratio of 824 to 1. Nonetheless, the three Republican commissioners voted with the 11 rather than 9,065. As I said, 500,000 postcards were received overall, and they were equally uniformly against this rule change.

As we said, it was another back-room deal. It only fuels the public perception that the Bush administration has a policy of giving corporations what they want regardless of consequences to the Nation. Enron writes energy policy for this administration. Wall Street writes Social Security privatization legislation. The insurance companies write Medicare legislation. The drug industry writes legislation overseeing the drug industry. It is issue after issue after issue. The chemical companies and the oil companies write legislation dealing with the environment.

About 2 weeks ago, the group of us who opposed this rule, a group of about 15 Democratic Members of Congress and an Independent, held a news conference, a news conference which, if that many Members of Congress put one on almost always is attended by The New York Times; The Washington Post; the L.A. Times; a couple of networks, AP, Fox, perhaps. A whole group of what we would call the corporate media. And we held this news conference in the middle of the day when the media were not that busy, yet we had zero turnout from those corporate media. Congress Daily, a couple of in-house newspapers around here showed up; but none of the big corporate media, none of the mainstream, quoted-unquote mainstream, generally corporate-owned conservative media in this Nation showed up.

That tells you a little bit about how much press coverage they really want for this. The large corporate media in this country do not really want the public to think about this, do not really want the public to know about this because they are the ones lobbying the FCC, they are the ones contributing to President Bush's campaign, they are the ones that contribute to Republican campaigns and Republican leadership; and they want their way with the FCC. Their way with the FCC is fewer companies, fewer corporations controlling the largest amount of media in this country, 1,200 radio stations owned by one company. The CEO of that company, the leaders of that company, good friends of the President from San Antonio, Texas.

It makes you wonder if the FCC is maybe next week, after this decision, going to change its name to instead of

the Federal Communications Commission, FCC, maybe to Furthering Corporate Control. Because furthering corporate control is what they have done. They have clearly acted against the public interest.

I would ask my friends on the other side of the aisle, if they really do believe in competition, if they believe in diversity, if they believe in a competitive leveling of the playing field in America like they say they do, then we should enact legislation undoing this FCC ruling.

I thank my friend from Vermont for his terrific leadership.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam Speaker, if the gentleman from Ohio could remain for a moment on this issue, because I want to dialogue with him on something that is interesting.

I think there may be citizens of our country who think, well, yes, this is an inside-the-Beltway issue; it really does not affect me very, very much. But I want to mention to my friend from Ohio on issues that I know he and I share similar concerns just what the implications of concentration of media are.

I know that my friend from Ohio is deeply concerned about our trade policy, a policy which now has over a \$400 billion trade deficit, a policy which has cost this country millions of decent-paying jobs as large corporations throw American workers out on the street, move to China, move to Mexico.

I would ask my friend from Ohio, how often has he seen discussions of the issue of the deindustrialization of America and the loss of good paying jobs on television or in the editorial pages of newspapers?

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. That is a very good question, and the answer is, rarely or never. The more detailed answer is lots of discussion about tax cuts, lots of discussion about Laci Peterson, lots of discussion about issues that really do not affect people's lives, but almost no discussion about York Manufacturing in my district, 400 good-paying jobs, closed shop, moved to Mexico. Little discussion about trade policy generally.

In fact, if my colleague will remember, during the NAFTA debate, some of us did some surveys of editorials in this country; and we found that editorial opinion was almost unanimous in support of the North American Free Trade Agreement, even though poll after poll after poll showed the majority of the public opposed it. The largest newspaper in the country that opposed NAFTA was the Toledo Blade, a fine newspaper in northwest Ohio, but perhaps the 50th or 60th size newspaper in the country, I am not sure, but clearly not one of the largest newspapers in the country. But that was the largest newspaper that actually opposed NAFTA.

But it is not just the editorial policy. We also did surveys of The Washington Post; and if there is a corporate-controlled medium in this country, it is it;

and The Washington Post op-ed pages were overwhelmingly in support of the North American Free Trade Agreement even though we sent in numerous articles. And to add to that, the Democratic whip, the majority whip, sent a letter to the editor of The Washington Post in those days outlining the number of articles, editorial opinions in support of NAFTA and against NAFTA; and they actually censored his letter to the editor and said we are not going to run that part, we will only run another part.

So it is pretty clear that the editorial page, the other opinion articles, the letters to the editor, and even the news coverage is slanted towards a corporate media, because that is what it is. It is a large corporation. Of course, just like General Motors is a conservative company, they care about their profits, The Washington Post, The New York Times, and all these corporate media are similar.

Mr. SANDERS. Just dealing with General Electric, the point here again is that sometimes people turn on the television and they say there is NBC. Well, no, it is not NBC. This is a subsidiary of General Electric.

For many, many years, General Electric has been an anti-union company. The fact of the matter is that if you are a member of a union in the United States today, you earn approximately 25 percent more than an American worker doing similar work who is not a member of a union. That is just a fact.

I would ask my friend from Ohio how often he has seen programs on General Electric's media or in fact any other media talking about the advantages of being a member of a union? Now, I myself have never seen a program like that. Maybe my friend has.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. Well, I come from an area, Ohio, which is a pretty unionized State, but I do not see them there either. My colleague comes from a State that is a little more rural; maybe you would not see it there. You would think you would see it in Ohio, but you do not see it in Ohio. It is pretty clear there are not a lot of labor unions owning newspapers or owning radio stations.

There is a show once a week out of a Cleveland radio station, a small part of this radio station, that talks about unions and has a pro-union moderator. That is the only show I have heard, and that is 1 hour on one station out of 15 stations or so and maybe 20 stations in greater Cleveland. Half of those stations are owned by the President's friend from San Antonio, which is becoming less and less diverse in its programming, more and more single minded, more and more conservative in its politics; and it is continuing to move in that direction.

But little or no discussion about the struggles people have, about unions, about work, about trade policy, about feeding their kids. Few shows devoted to single parents trying to struggle through life. Lots of shows about glam-

our, lots of shows about the rich, lots of shows about tax cuts; but nothing about the struggles of every day people.

Mr. SANDERS. I think my friend from Ohio put his finger right on the issue, and that is in our country today, there are tens of millions of families who are struggling hard to keep their heads above water. These are people in my State, and I am sure in Ohio, who are not working one job; they are working two jobs, three jobs. They are working 50, 60 hours a week. They are worried about their pensions, worried about their health care situation. It would seem to me that the media might want to focus on those issues.

I have the feeling in the back of my head that truthfully General Electric is not particularly anxious to educate people on those issues; not to talk about the horrendously unfair distribution of wealth and income that we have in this country; not to talk about the fact that the United States is the only Nation in the industrialized world that does not guarantee health care for all people; not to talk about the fact that our pharmaceutical prices are by far the highest prices in the world because we are the only Nation that does not regulate the pharmaceutical industry.

So the point that I am making here is that I do not want anyone to think this is some kind of abstract, obtuse, inside-the-Beltway issue that does not affect their lives. It does affect their lives. The media, to a significant degree, ignores the struggles and the needs of working families throughout this country, not giving them the information they need.

Mr. BROWN of Ohio. My friend from Vermont mentions the drug companies. Now, the drug companies, how often in the newspapers or in TV or radio shows do we hear, unless maybe they quote one of us, and there are not that many of us talking about that, that the drug industry is the most profitable industry in America for 20 years straight; that they pay the lowest tax rate in America for 20 years straight; that taxpayers do almost half of all the research and development on prescription drugs; that Canada's prices are one-half or one-third what they are in the United States; that we are the only country in the world that does not do something to regulate or lower or try to push down drug prices? Not one story ever, almost never a story about that.

Rarely is there a story about why drugs are cheaper in Canada, what the Canadian Government does. Rarely is there a story about what the French or the British or the Germans or the Japanese or the Israelis do to get drug prices down. There are a lot of advertisements on all those stations about prescription drugs, about arthritis drugs, about asthma drugs, about cholesterol-reducing drugs; and all that stuff is good information for the public, but millions, actually billions, of dollars going into the pockets of these

corporations that own the media and few if any stories about how the drug companies really rip off the American public.

When you think about that, all this money coming in to these corporations to advertise, of course they are not going to bite the hand that feeds them. Of course they are not going to expose the drug companies' kind of practices and decision-making. Of course they are not going to talk about 600 lobbyists in this town alone lobbying the United States Congress. Of course they are not going to talk about the \$15 million that the drug companies are going to spend in my own State, in one State, to try to kill a ballot issue and to keep it off the ballot. Of course they are not going to do any of this because they are getting so much money from the drug companies.

I do not accuse the media of being sleazy for that. That is probably a good business practice. But what I accuse as sleazy is the way they lobby the FCC and get the three Republicans on the FCC to do their bidding, to do whatever corporate America wants. That is what is outrageous.

So point the finger at the drug industry and some of the media; but more importantly, point the finger at the people on the other side of the aisle, the Republicans, who stand by these decisions and do whatever corporate America wants them to.

□ 2145

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE).

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman organizing this special order on a dark day for American democracy, because today the FCC, in almost a little hidden cabinet without taking adequate input from the American public, struck a low blow for information going to Americans.

I have come to the floor because I am hopeful that the U.S. House will listen to the thousands of Democrats and Republicans who have barraged the FCC with e-mails and letters that were ignored, and will come to the rescue and change this rule in a way that is good for democracy.

Since the FCC proposed this rule, they wanted to keep this as quiet as possible. They wanted to sweep it under the rug. They wanted as few Americans as possible to know what they were doing to America's broadcast rights. What they did was they decided to have the statutorily minimum number of hearings in a minimally accessible place, so they had one hearing in Virginia.

Now to put this in context, when the Forest Service thought about changing a rule regarding the forest, they had 600 hearings around America so Americans could let Congress know what was going on.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, the gentleman and some people in Seattle initiated a public meeting in Seattle.

Mr. INSLEE. And 350 people turned out, essentially spontaneously, with about 48 hours' notice to tar and feather the FCC commissioners who were going to ram this down their throats, and these folks were very, very angry. And the reason they were angry was, they understood the game being played by the FCC here. People are sophisticated enough to get this.

The argument has been made if the anticonsolidation rules are removed, we would have a plethora of new stations to listen to, and radio is frequently used as an example. They say, There are still a lot of radio stations out there, which is true, but what Americans understand and what people in Seattle were so upset about, they realize there might be a lot of stations, but they are owned by the same people. One company owns 1,200 radio stations. Before these rules were relaxed, the most radio stations owned by one company was 65.

It does not matter if we have 20 hoses all coming from the same spigot, and that is the situation that the FCC is allowing to take place.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, when people go to a newsstand and they see hundreds, if not thousands, of magazines, they say, Wow, look at the diversity of opinion. And we all know there are hundreds and hundreds of television stations out there.

I would remind the gentleman that in the last days of the Soviet Union, which was a totalitarian society, some people had the impression that there was one newspaper and one television station and one radio station. Wrong. There were hundreds, if not thousands. The only problem was that all of them were either controlled by the Communist Party of the Soviet Union or the government of the Soviet Union.

The gentleman's point exactly. All kinds of outlets; the problem is, controlled by, in that case, two institutions.

Well, we do not have two institutions, we have more, six, eight, nine institutions. But every day, and as a result of this deregulation effort, that number is going to be smaller and smaller. So do not kid yourself when you say hundreds of television stations and radio stations; ask who owns them.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, in response to this, and we have heard the response of the FCC who pushed through this rule, their response is we do not know that is going to happen. We do not know that consolidation is going to take place.

I do not think that it is rocket science to realize, if we remove rules against consolidation, there is going to be consolidation. This is not rocket science, either, because we have had an experiment with this in radio. The largest number of stations owned was 65 before the anticonsolidation, and now it is 1,200; and that is why this is a bipartisan concern.

It is interesting, groups as disparate as the National Rifle Association and

William Safire have come out against this. I love to quote William Safire, at least when I agree with him. He said, "The concentration of power, political, corporate, media, cultural, should be anathema to conservatives. Why do we have more channels but fewer real choices today? Because the ownership of our means of communication is shrinking. Moguls glory in amalgamation, but more individuals than they realize resent the loss of local control and community identity."

I think that is what happened to the FCC. They may have been stunned by this outpouring of concern, but it is there. Ninety-nine percent of all of the input they have received in the last several months on this issue is against the very rules they just shoved down America's throat.

Mr. SANDERS. I think the gentleman is absolutely right in two regards. Number one, there is enormous concern over this issue from one end of this country to the other. Just a few days ago I was in San Diego, California, with the gentleman from California (Mr. FILNER), who held a public meeting on this issue, and the problem was, he had rented a hall that could only seat 200 people and 400 people showed up, so half of the people had to be outside listening to the meeting via speakerphone.

We held a meeting outside of Burlington, Vermont, we are a small city in a small State, and we had 600 people come out to hear Michael Coppins, who has been one of the courageous commissioners on this issue, traveling all over the country.

There is massive public concern, and your point earlier about the outrage that, on an issue of this significance, Mr. Powell did not have public meetings all over the United States; and if he had, no question, based on your experience and my experience, hundreds of thousands of Americans would likely have come out to say, No, we believe in a democratic society, and a handful of people controlling the media is not what a democratic society is all about. I suspect he knew that, which is why he held one public hearing in the daytime in Richmond, Virginia.

I yield to the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER).

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the gentleman coming forward this evening to spend a few minutes via one of the avenues of public expression that is still available to us to be able to talk to people about this. The gentleman's comments a moment ago with the gentleman from Washington (Mr. INSLEE) touched a nerve with me.

We have been watching this issue slowly bubble in the background, move into the public consciousness. We have all expressed and we have all experienced an outpouring in our own districts, our own correspondence, phone calls, e-mails. It is fascinating to me that over the last 6 months I have not had one Oregonian express to me sup-

port for the direction the FCC has taken, not one.

One would think that for something that is this momentous, there would be at some point, on some level, some indication that ordinary men and women, that business people, government leaders, that somebody would be there expressing the case for this relatively radical approach.

To the contrary, we have seen in our community the same deep bipartisan apprehension and opposition that has been expressed here this evening. People know on several levels that competition matters, that we benefit from a diversity of voices. Certainly, in this Chamber there are a variety of different points of view. I think on those occasions when we are actually able to express it, I think we do our jobs better and the American public is better served.

But the people that I work with are aware that today almost every television station, whether we go to Nashville, Redmond, Washington, or Burlington, Vermont, the news sounds the same. They have the same air-brushed approach. They have basically the same television accents. They use the same media consultants to craft the sets that they use. They all use the same gyrations, putting forth everything from the weather to on-the-spot news. The same formats ensue because people are being driven by the same media consultants and the pressures from advertisers.

Now, as the gentleman points out, we are going to have the ultimate homogeneous force, and that is concentration of ownership into a handful of conglomerates that are going to be dictating it. It seems to me that there will be no reason for our news to be indistinguishable, distorted pabulum that is more entertainment than delivering information.

I have one short, final point to make. I think the gentleman's expression here this evening, bringing forward others, indicates why I do not think this is going to be the last word on this subject. The House and the Senate have the opportunity. They were the ones that originally decided that the people's airwaves, the public airwaves, were going to be given to commercial broadcasters in return for some public benefit. Since we passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996, we have seen these competitive forces eroded away, people forgetting the public benefit; and I think that the issues that you are focusing on here will produce such a backlash it will be possible for us to be responsive to the public, and hopefully we will see some action that will reverse this egregious act.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, there is another aspect of this issue, and that is the aspects of localism. Vermont is different from Oregon, and we should pride ourselves on our differences and not see us become homogeneous. From 1981 to 1989, I was the mayor of the city of Burlington, Vermont, and when I

was mayor, there were four or five local radio stations who covered the news. We would hold a press conference, and there would be four or five takes on what we said. Now, if we are lucky, there is one radio station covering the news, and that phenomenon has gone on all over this country.

I remind my friends and colleagues that as a result of the deregulation decision today, there will be hundreds of cities and towns in America where there will be one company owning the local TV station, radio station and newspaper; and if anyone thinks that is not a dangerous situation, I would strongly disagree with that person.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to respond to this bogus argument that the Republican FCC commissioners put up when they decided to repeal this fairly long-standing, common-sense approach that has enjoyed up to now bipartisan support, and I hope will again.

They argued that, essentially, because we have had a technological revolution in the last decade or so, that removes the necessity of having rules against somebody getting too egregious a distribution proportion.

□ 2200

They said basically that the Internet solves all ills that humans will ever know. I am from the most Internet-involved part of the world probably. I represent the First Congressional District of the State of Washington. It is where a little company called Microsoft is located, together with probably thousands of spin-off companies from Microsoft. I represent a community that are evangelists for the Internet, who really are believers that this is a way to change the way we do business in fundamental ways. But the people there have told me, do not let the FCC remove these anticonsolidation rules, the fans of the Internet, the fans of new technology, the believers in new technology.

What they tell me is the reason we still need these rules is that even though we have now Web-based distribution systems, the Web distributors are owned by the TV companies. It is the same message. What they tell me, again coming back to this kind of host analysis, you don't get a new view just because it is a Web-hosted message if it is the same message you are getting on television or if it is the same message you are getting in the newspaper. And so what they have told me, do not let them remove these anticonsolidation rules. The Internet cannot solve the fact that democracy suffers when there are fewer voices to provide Americans the news. This is going to result, as God made little green apples, in fewer voices delivering news to Americans because that is exactly what has happened in the radio industry, and we know that that is going to happen.

Mr. SANDERS. I would point out, my friend mentioned Clear Channel, which was the company that really sprouted

after radio deregulation in 1996 and now owns some 1,200 radio stations. It is important to recognize that Clear Channel not only owns radio stations; they own a lot more. Clear Channel is the largest concert promoter in the country, selling 66 million tickets in 26,000 events in 2001. Why is that significant? It is significant because if you are an entertainer promoted by Clear Channel, obviously you are going to get a lot more air time on their radio stations than somebody who is not. You could be the greatest singer in the world; but maybe if you are not promoted by Clear Channel, you might not get the opportunity to appear on those radio stations.

So I think the issue here is like anything else. We are living in a country where fewer and fewer large corporations own more and more of our Nation. That is a bad situation in general; but I think what we recognize when it comes to the media, it is not just bad from an economic sense in terms of stifling competition; it is bad in what it does to the clash of ideas and diversity of opinions.

We have heard from people, for example, who are involved in African American broadcasting, and what they are saying is they are losing their stations being bought out by the large conglomerates. The same is true with Latino stations. Again, fewer and fewer large companies, homogeneous-type broadcasting one end of the country to the other, fewer ideas for the American people.

Mr. INSLEE. I think it is important to note, too, that there is an economic reason why this new rule, which is going to create these large concentrations of media power, is a bad idea. I think it is important to talk about the economic reason as well. The economic reason is that these megacorporation media conglomerates will have the ability to stifle entry of new businesses, particularly small businesses who want to break into the media market. One of the great things about the American economy is we have traditionally recognized having a dynamic economy which allows entry into the market is important so that people can get new ideas, new creative products and the like.

Here is a fellow who is not exactly in William Safire's philosophical base, but he had an interesting comment. Ted Turner said, if these rules had been in place in 1970, it would have been virtually impossible for me to start Turner Broadcasting or, 10 years later, to launch CNN. The reason it would be impossible is that these consolidations basically allow these companies to build these Chinese walls around their little media fortresses which prevents these small businesses from breaking into the market.

So if you are a small business-oriented person who believes in a dynamic entry of markets, this is a mistake to allow these sort of giant conglomerates to take over. Fundamentally, though,

the democratic argument and the damage to democracy is the one that is really bothering Americans tonight, because one of the things we have learned through history is that the paper on the parchment of the Bill of Rights and the U.S. Constitution are nice and they are important; but the Soviet Union had the same language in their Constitution, but they did not have a vigorous press or a vigorous independent judicial branch, and democracy never got going. We are very concerned that absent a vigorous, competitive, dynamic, change-oriented media in our democracy that our democracy will suffer. You can have the best Members of the U.S. Congress, the best Members of the U.S. Senate, and an enlightened President; but unless Americans can get the truth by looking at various different colors in the spectrum, this place is not going to work.

And so, yes, there is an economic rationale; but people value democracy above everything, and they understand the threat that has happened in this rule. I believe, and I know that the gentleman and I and others will be working to pass legislation to reverse this rule. As you know, we have co-sponsored a bill already to repeal the 45 percent national consolidation. Other bills will be introduced. We hope to attract bipartisan consensus. We hope Americans will let their Members of Congress know what to do here.

Mr. SANDERS. I would just pick up on that point from my friend from Washington. If there is anything good about what has happened in the last few months, what has been good is that more and more people are now aware of what is happening in this issue than was previously the case. As my friend from Washington indicated, we are going to be introducing probably several pieces of legislation not only to undo the damage of today's decision but to create a situation in which we improve upon what existed yesterday.

My friend mentioned earlier that hundreds and hundreds of thousands of people, progressives, moderates, conservatives, people in the NRA, people in the conservative President's Parents Television Council, people from all across the political spectrum have communicated with the FCC to the tune of some 750,000 communications. Yet despite the fact that the communications were overwhelmingly in opposition to more media deregulation, the FCC moved in that direction.

My friend might be interested in knowing, why does that happen? How does it happen? I would point out one of many reasons and that is the power which is not limited just to the FCC but the power that the industry has over the regulators. Sometimes people think that the regulators regulate the industry. In truth, given the role that money plays in Washington, more often than not it is the industry that regulates the regulators. The Center for Public Integrity recently reported

that over the last 8 years the FCC took staff and members on some 2,500 junkets that were paid for by the industry. Industry paid for trips for FCC commissioners and top staffers to be flown to hundreds of conferences, conventions, and broadcast industry events in Las Vegas, coincidentally Las Vegas, 330 trips to Las Vegas for FCC members and staff, New Orleans, New York, London, San Francisco, Miami, Anchorage, Palm Springs, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, all over the world. The industry was paying for the visits and the travel done by the members of the commission and the staff.

Mr. INSLEE. And the reason that I think people are so upset about this, and they are upset, I have talked to a lot of people who are really hot about this issue, and I think justifiably because this has been one of the more outrageous instances of a public agency willfully and consciously, number one, shutting to the extent humanly possible the public out of the decision-making process of their government by holding one hearing in one part of the country. There were other members of the commission who begged the chairman, Mr. Powell, to hold multiple hearings, because he knew this was something that really people cared about around the country, not just inside the Beltway, and Mr. Powell refused. Because they are too busy? Excuse me, this is the single most important decision of the FCC probably in the last 10 years, but they only hold one hearing because they do not want to listen to Americans, and it is wrong. Then when the word snuck out through various efforts, including our own, they have been deluged with almost a unanimous position of the Americans who care about this.

And what is their response to Americans who have taken the time to send postcards, to send e-mails, to call in? Their response has been, go fish. That is about what it boils down to. I heard Mr. Powell today briefly, I did not hear his whole comments, but I heard him say, if we don't do something, this rule will get changed anyway by the courts. That is true if you do not prepare a record; if you do not go out and ask people what is going on in America to prepare the record, then this rule might be subject to judicial scrutiny. He is correct. But the reason is that they did not go out and ask anybody around America. They held one lousy hearing. So if they want to preserve the rule which they had the opportunity to do, they needed to build a record. The reason they did not build a record is they knew the message they were going to get. They had a pre-disposed decision. These commissioners had made a decision before they opened up these hearings at all. It is pretty obvious when you see the railroad job that took place.

Mr. SANDERS. I would say to the 750,000 people who communicated with the FCC, the 750,000 people who said do not deregulate the industry more so

that a tiny handful of companies will control what we see, hear and read, I would say to those people and to the Members of Congress not to give up on this issue. We suffered a setback today which was not unexpected. I think we all knew what was going to happen. But the fact that so many people from the State of Washington or the State of Oregon or the State of Vermont and all the States in between, that so many people are now aroused about this issue, are upset at what happened, are going to fight for a more democratic media, is a positive thing.

Clearly now the ball falls to the people in this Congress to undo the damage done by the FCC. I know that I will be working with my friend from Washington and my friend from Oregon and people from all political points of view to undo the damage done today so that we create a media that we are proud of, where the American people become not just the best entertained people in the world but the best informed people, where the media gives our democratic society the ideas and the information that people need in order to make informed decisions in a democratic society.

We have got our work cut out for us. I have not the slightest doubt in my mind that the vast majority of the American people stand with us and do not want to see a few corporations controlling the media, and our job now is to take that support and to convert it into strong legislation.

Mr. INSLEE. I just have a closing comment, which is that democracy is not self-executing. It does not get done by itself. Now is a moment for all men and women to come to the aid of their country on this issue. We need, those of us who care deeply about this, for everyone to let their Member of the U.S. Congress and Senate know how they feel about this issue, because we need to kindle and blow a little air on this fire to keep it going. We are going to hope that we will have enough support across the aisle of our good friends, the Republicans, that we are going to have enough Republicans who will join us in forcing a vote on this issue on the House floor. That is going to be very important. It will be a great victory on a bipartisan basis for American democracy. I thank the gentleman for raising this important issue.

Mr. SANDERS. I thank the gentleman from Washington and the gentleman from Oregon for their very thoughtful remarks. This is an issue of huge consequences. We have got to go forward together to undo the damage done today.

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong opposition to today's vote by the Federal Communications Commission, FCC, to relax limitations on media ownership.

Apparently, the FCC has overlooked the fact that the airwaves are owned by the American public, just as the Commission has forgotten that its legislated mission is to protect those same airwaves for the public's use.

Relaxing rules that have worked for decades in order to allow huge conglomerates to

gobble up even more media outlets will certainly diminish the quality of our news and stifle minority views and opinions.

I find it particularly interesting that while the FCC regulators and their staff were reviewing the changes, they took some 2,500 junkets—worth almost \$3 million—which were paid for by the media industry. During all that time, the Commission managed to hold just one public hearing. Does anyone have any doubt to whom the FCC was listening during its deliberation process—the media moguls or the public?

I understand how the FCC decisions will benefit those media conglomerates. What I do not understand is how they benefit private citizens or our democracy, which can only survive on the free flow of information and diverse opinions.

Now that the decision has been made, it will be up to Congress to review these rules. I look forward to working with my colleagues to make sure that public interest will be heard—and that our airwaves will not fall victim to powerful special interests. I would like to share with my colleagues an op-ed I authored on this issue which appeared today in Rochester, New York's Democrat & Chronicle.

TOO LITTLE DISCUSSION HAS PRECEDED FCC DECISION ON MEDIA OWNERSHIP

(By Representative Louise M. Slaughter)

What if one person controlled all the information in the newspaper you are reading, on your favorite radio station and on the TV channel you watch nightly?

It could begin to happen today, when a five-member panel at the Federal Communications Commission votes on relaxing regulations governing media ownership in this nation.

Sixty years ago, when television was just a fledgling invention, the FCC was created to ensure that our airwaves—which the American public owns—would not be dominated by a few large corporations that could control information and news.

Our government rightly recognized that the free flow of ideas, opinions and information is central to the ongoing national dialogue that drives this great democracy. Protecting local and minority ownership of media outlets is also crucial to guaranteeing coverage of local issues and diverse viewpoints.

As time passed, a few large corporations began to acquire more newspapers, radio and TV stations across our nation. Thirty years ago, there were 1,500 locally or regionally owned newspapers. Now, there are only 281 such independent papers. Six large companies control most of the media in this nation, while three corporations control all the cable news.

After 1996, when the FCC relaxed ownership limits for radio stations, 90 percent of radio stations were bought or sold within five years. Hundreds of stations have been consolidated since then: Clear Channel now owns more than 1,200 radio stations. Before, they could own only 40.

In Rochester alone, six of our radio stations are owned by Clear Channel. Four more are owned by Infinity Broadcasting. Thus the information and music aired on 10 stations in Rochester are controlled by two conglomerates that are based nowhere near here and have little concern for our local issues.

The FCC is now considering relaxing its regulations even further, which will certainly lead to a dangerous concentration of media ownership. The proposed changes would allow networks to own stations reaching as much as 90 percent of the country,

allow companies to own three television stations in some markets and would do away with a 28-year ban on companies owning both a newspaper and a TV station in the same market.

What is perhaps more egregious is the secretive process through which these changes have been considered. The FCC tried to keep the plan's details secret and refused to have more than one, barely publicized hearing on the issue. FCC Chairman Michael Powell has rejected requests from two of his own commission members to delay the vote for more public comment.

Fortunately, even though this issue got relatively little media coverage, the American public has taken action. Progressive and conservative interest groups, artists and 200 communications academics have protested the new rules. Of the 9,000 e-mails the FCC has received on the issue, only 11 supported relaxing the rules. I, along with 100 of my colleagues in Congress, recently wrote to Chairman Powell expressing our opposition to the proposed rules. Unfortunately, the FCC is not listening.

Owners of media outlets are obliged to serve the public interest—not just their own financial interests. Our Founding Fathers created this democracy to give us the right to debate ideas openly and make informed choices. If these changes go into effect, a few huge, powerful corporations could gobble up even more media outlets to control most of the news we get.

Be grateful that today you had the opportunity to read about these proposed changes, supported by the powerful media conglomerates. If they have their way, the next time the FCC decides to change the rules, you may not be informed at all.

Mr. FOSSELLA. Madam Speaker, I want to take a minute to discuss an issue that is very important to many men and women in my district and to the men and women working in the telecommunications industry.

The FCC is preparing for a release of their Triennial Review of the UNE-P and I want to weigh in with my colleagues as to the fundamentals of how the UNE-P pricing model works, or as I see it, doesn't work.

Suppose you, an entrepreneur, go in to manufacture candy bars and you invest significant capital to create this wonderful factory and generate candy bars. You operate for 30 years, during which you must buy new equipment, and maintain that equipment. The bottom line of your costs is say, \$.75. You determine to sell them in the retail market for \$1. Then you discover that there is a regulatory body empowered by the Congress that regulates candy bars and one of their missions is to promote competition. One day, these regulators come to you and they say, "You know what? We think since you're the largest candy bar manufacturer, you should have a competitor. And we have someone that we want to be your competitor." Then the regulators tell you one way in which they've determined to promote competition is for you to allow this competitor to sell your product from your machinery and buildings at \$.75 or in some cases less than \$.75, so they in turn can resell it in the market for a profit to them, and a loss to your company.

All the money you just spent to build a building which stores the machinery you use to make your product, package your product, distribute you're product, and maintain all of this, is used to provide a product to your competitor for the same price or less of a price that is costs you, only they don't have any risk.

I pose the question to the regulators and my colleagues. What would you do as CEO of this candy bar company, what do you feel is the right thing to do? I see it to be wrong and think the regulators should take steps to mitigate this wrong or change it while they still have a chance.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. SANDERS. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks on the subject of my Special Order this evening.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. HARRIS). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Vermont? There was no objection.

□ 2215

PRESERVING AND PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Oregon (Mr. BLUMENAUER) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, it is interesting to review the ebb and flow of the political tides, as we have had here this evening, where we here on Capitol Hill deal with the ebb and flow of various political crises, whether it is the struggle against global terrorism, whether it is the battle of the economy, budgets and tax cuts, where the economy is hopefully a short-term problem, where the perversion of tax and budget priorities hopefully is temporary in nature, and it is, after all, within our power to change priorities to adjust tax rates and make infrastructure investments.

There is, Madam Speaker, however, a greater battle, and one over which, if we are not careful, we may not be able to exercise such control. I am speaking, of course, of the struggle to preserve and protect our environment, because we are watching the slow, relentless poisoning of air and water, the destruction of habitat, which puts millions of people at risk on a daily basis and inflicts permanent damage.

The World Health Organization, for example, suggests that water-borne diseases kill at least 3.5 million people every year. That is more than three times as many people who were lost in the World Trade Center, who die every day, 365 days a year. It is within our power, our capacity, to do something about it.

It was my privilege to be in South Africa last fall as the world came together, the largest United Nations conference in history, making commitments to what we were going to do to try and make changes like that to protect the environment. I watched as the United States joined with over 104 other heads of state, 194 countries in all, to make commitments, for instance, that over 1 million people who

do not have access to clean drinking water, we would cut that amount in half in the next 15 years.

I think a number of people felt uncomfortable with that, thinking about how many people would be sentenced to unnecessary death and disease, but it was an important goal. But that goal suggests that we are going to provide, even that modest goal, 211,000 people per day, clean drinking water who do not have it, in order to reach that 15-year goal of just cutting it in half. It is an example of these threats that we face to the environment.

I would like to reflect for a few moments this evening about what we are doing dealing with these two great global threats.

We have focused our attention on the greater environment in terms of the atmosphere and our oceans. Fifty years ago space was our proxy in a struggle against communism. Ten years later, we had the Stratton Commission, ushering in a new era for the space under our oceans' surfaces. We have spent billions of dollars trying to penetrate deep space, a somewhat lesser amount dealing with our oceans, while we as a planet continue to affect weather patterns, affect global climate change, global warming and disease.

Madam Speaker, I think it is important for us to be able to focus on what we can do to make a difference in those areas.

I have often on this floor dealt with issues dealing with global warming. The scientific consensus is agreed to, although it is slow in dawning on Members of Congress, and our policies do not yet reflect it. But when you deal with objective members of science, 15 years ago what was a debatable proposition that we were affecting the Earth's climate in cataclysmic ways, now the vast scientific consensus, including the commission that wrote the report from the National Academy of Sciences 2 years ago requested by President Bush, confirms that we now know that global warming and this climate change is a reality; that it is, in all likelihood, a world where our children will inherit a Glacier National Park with no glaciers, indeed, no glaciers at all in the continental United States.

The sudden occurrence of open water at the North Pole for the first time in recorded history is now being followed by evidence of rapid melting of the polar areas, and we face consequences like the extinction of polar bears within our children's lifetime.

But the problems are not just with trophy species and signature landmarks like mountain glaciers. We are changing the envelope, as Professor Holden, Director of the Program on Science and Technology and Public Policy at Harvard University, expresses it, the envelope in which all other environmental conditions and processes operate.

It will be impacting the productivity of our farms, our forests and fisheries,