

first place. The FCC regulates the broadcast airwaves—and it should remain that way.

Perhaps most disturbing is the way the FCC went about implementing this radical new rule. First, it completely ignored Congress's bipartisan bill, the Media Ownership Act, of which I am a proud cosponsor. Then it ignored the public. Indeed, the Chairman's proposed rule changes were first made public in an op-ed he published in the New York Times outlining the changes for the first time—which might have been helpful had the public comment period not already closed the day his column appeared.

Public comments are not merely a formality, Mr. President—they are a vital piece of the rulemaking process and an integral part of responsive, open government. Five years ago, more than 3 million Americans spoke out when the FCC voted without any public input whatsoever to allow a single company to own up to three television stations, a local newspaper, a cable system, and as many as eight radio stations in a single media market. In large part because of the public outcry, the courts overturned the rules.

Mr. President, it isn't more consolidation and homogenization the American people want from their media—it is less. No one can seriously argue that the consolidation of the media in recent years has been a good development for the fourth estate. As coverage has become increasingly superficial, people wonder more than ever about the quality of the information they are receiving from the media. And quite frankly, I do not blame them.

Must we act to ensure the strength and vitality of the American media in the 21st century? Absolutely. But that should be accomplished within an open and transparent framework as prescribed in the Media Ownership Act—a process that gives the public a voice in this fight. As the Senator from North Dakota has said, "Localism and diversity of media ownership is vital in a democracy."

Indeed it is, Mr. President. It is time to tell the FCC that this is no way to maintain a free, open and diverse media, and I urge all my colleagues to support this resolution of disapproval.

Mr. STEVENS. I yield the remainder of my time.

Mr. DORGAN. I ask the Senator from Washington to use the remainder of my time.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, I rise, obviously, to encourage my colleagues here. This is an issue we dealt with before. While media consolidation might be good for Wall Street, it is not good for Main Street. The diversity of voices has been a key component to our society, and preserving them by making sure we don't have a consolidation of media is very important.

I urge my colleagues to disapprove of the FCC rule on media consolidation.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. All time has expired.

The question is on the passage of the joint resolution.

The joint resolution (S.J. Res. 28) was ordered to be engrossed for a third reading, was read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S.J. RES. 28

Resolved by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That Congress disapproves the rule submitted by the Federal Communications Commission relating to broadcast media ownership (Report and Order FCC 07-216), received by Congress on February 22, 2008, and such rule shall have no force or effect.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I move to reconsider the vote and I move to lay that motion on the table.

The motion to lay on the table was agreed to.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the Senate now be in a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DORGAN. Mr. President, I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Washington.

MEDIA DIVERSITY

Ms. CANTWELL. Mr. President, for those who may not have observed that voice vote, it was a very positive result for the voices of America supporting diversity. I want to spend a few minutes talking about this issue, to make sure we give it the due consideration that is important.

Mr. DORGAN. I wonder if the Senator from Washington will yield for a question. I have to leave the Chamber due to another event.

First, I thank the Senator from Washington. Senator CANTWELL has been unbelievably strong and supportive in getting us to this point of having passed the resolution of disapproval. We got it through the Commerce Committee. She was a leader in that effort. We now have voice voted it. It has passed the Senate.

I did want to say, as I said earlier, the issue here is simple. We have far too much concentration in the media. The Federal Communications Commission, at least the Chairman and two others who have been members, have become cheerleaders of more concentration. That means less localism. It means your local radio station, in many cases your television station, other media outlets, are run by somebody living 1,500 miles away, running homogenized music through a radio station having nothing to do with covering the local baseball team or news events. I think this moves in exactly the wrong direction. I believe there

needs to be more localism and I think there has to be a procedure on localism at the Federal Communications Commission. There need to be public interest standards with respect to broadcasters that do not now exist. The standards have been emasculated. We have a lot to do to put this back on track.

Suffice it to say, the FCC was anxious to move in the direction of more consolidation, allowing newspapers to buy up television stations. We have had a ban on that for three decades. We prohibited the cross ownership in a market. The reason we have done that is pretty simple: We don't want there to be only one or a couple of dominant voices in a market. We want there to be many voices.

That is what our purpose is, to bring this resolution of disapproval. It is unusual to do this, but we did it. It got through the Commerce Committee, now through the Senate. It says to the Federal Communications Commission, get things right, do things right, don't truncate these things and cut the American people out of this process.

We have also said today we believe this is moving in the wrong direction. Everybody says there are more voices out there in the Internet and cable channels and so on. More voices but the same ventriloquist. We had one person testify from Los Angeles who came and said in my office we have 48 cable channels. I went through who owns the channels—42 of them are owned by the same few companies and that is the problem with concentration.

I again thank the Senator from Washington. She has done a great job and I am proud to work with her and Senator SNOWE especially, on the other side, and Senator LOTT when he was here, to accomplish this result.

Ms. CANTWELL. I thank the Senator from North Dakota. The praise should go to Senator DORGAN for his leadership on this issue for the last year-plus time, continuing to make sure the Senate holds the FCC accountable for their actions, trying to pass a rule on media consolidation when they know there have been dissenting views all across America about this issue. Certainly there has been a dissent from the Senate.

The ownership of broadcast and print media does touch on some of the core values Americans hold for freedom of speech, open and diverse viewpoints, to have vibrant economic competition from a variety of sources, and local diversity.

Attention to diversity and localism has served our economy well and has also provided us a good civics lesson. These opportunities—when we hear from small companies, when we hear from minorities, when we hear from women—are the types of diversity we want to protect. We did that tonight.

The diversity in media does energize our democracy. Viewpoint diversity that comes from the various views that