

people: Less local control and community-oriented programming; less independently produced programming; fewer divergent views and opinions; fewer minority-owned broadcast stations.

And now, the FCC has green-lighted further media concentration by voting to overturn a 32-year-old rule prohibiting the cross-ownership of newspapers and broadcast stations—a rule that could impact markets in which nearly half of the American public lives and works.

Put simply, the FCC rule change would harm local and independent owners and help big media owners. In particular, the change further disadvantages minority media owners. While such owners control a mere 3 percent of the Nation's commercial TV stations, as many as 90 percent of minority media owners would be subject to these new rules. Further consolidation will simply reduce the number of opportunities for minorities to enter the market while putting those already in the market more at risk of being forced out by larger media conglomerates.

The FCC argues that this rule is necessary to “save” the newspaper industry. But as an internal FCC study showed, despite all the stories we are hearing about newspaper cutbacks, publicly traded newspapers earn 16 to 18 percent annual rates of return. An internal FCC memo found the industry as a whole to be profitable. That is to say nothing of the fact that the FCC has given no compelling reason for it to be in the newspaper business in the 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 can now be expressed are key to making us a stronger nation.

Having independent sources of news helps citizens to take opinions, not just locally but nationally and even globally. That is why I am glad we stopped the FCC from moving forward on their media consolidation proposal.

I remind my colleagues of the history here because I have a feeling this issue may come up again. Back in 2002, the FCC initiated its biennial review process, announcing the agency would fulfill and review the full range of broadcast ownership rules, but the announcement of the review was the only thing that was truly conducted in public.

On June 23, 2003, on a 3-to-2 party line vote, the FCC issued its new rules on media consolidation. Then-Chairman Powell did not issue the proposed rule for public comment prior to the vote.

The reason I am bringing this up is because what ensued is millions of peo-

ple sent e-mails and weighed in with postcards and petitions to oppose the rule. In fact, the Senate sent a very clear message to the FCC at the time invalidating that proposed media consolidation proposal.

The Third Circuit Court of Appeals reviewed the FCC decision from 2003 and they determined it was “not supported by reasonable analysis.”

What happened after that? Obviously there were a lot of people in loud chorus saying they disapproved of the FCC’s action to further concentrate the media in this country. In 2007 the FCC passed the new media ownership rule, barely a month after it was proposed, allowing for little public comment and for even less time for consideration of the comments that came in. I know Chairman Martin likes to talk about allowing public comment for over 120 days and 6 hearings around the country, but all of that was done before the rule was even out there in public, what the actual changes would be.

In one example, they came to Seattle on November 9 and I think we had a mere 1-week notice for that. They had the meeting on a Friday afternoon. I think it was a 3-day weekend. Maybe they thought no one would show up, but it does not take a lot of notice in Seattle to get people to show up for a hearing about media consolidation, so 800 people showed up and spent 9 hours letting the Commission know their thoughts on what they thought the impact of increased media concentration would be.

It would hurt competition. It would lessen diversity. It would impact localism and was not in the broader public interest. I know Chairman Martin received an earful in Seattle, but clearly he didn’t pay much attention to what we said, because a few days later he proposed new media ownership rules. They were released in a November 13 op-ed piece, I think in the New York Times, in a Commission press release.

So what we are saying is we do not like the process which the FCC pursued in not having the broadest public comment in this, and also when it looks at some of the issues that were discussed in trying to validate why the Commission continues to try to push for media consolidation.

I think it is very important. We have seen a pattern emerge. We see economic studies from the Commission where they cannot hold up to peer review, where data are not supportive of the predetermined conclusions that the FCC had, and that maybe they were “checking the box” when it comes to these public hearings and maybe giving mere lip service to localism and to women and minority ownership issues.

So all of those issues are going to continue to be duly noted by the Commerce Committee, and certainly we are going to continue to fight on this issue. The FCC media ownership rules were

created decades ago to foster these longstanding goals that our country has to promote competition, to promote localism, to have diversity of voices.

The courts and industry experts and elected officials of all ranks across America have come together in an overwhelming chorus saying “no” to the FCC move to try to further consolidate the media.

I am glad my colleagues tonight as well disapproved of their action so we can continue to have the diversity of voices in America that I believe my constituents and Americans all across this country deserve.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

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

#### THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE NATIONAL GOVERNORS ASSOCIATION

Mr. CARPER. Mr. President, I want to say a few words on the 100th anniversary of the National Governors Association.

I especially want to thank my friend and colleague Senator DURBIN for yielding to me to speak first this evening.

It was 100 years ago today that the first meeting of our Nation’s Governors took place. In recognition of the National Governors Association’s Centennial today, I, along with a number of my colleagues, including Senator VOINOVICH of Ohio and Senator ALEXANDER of Tennessee, have submitted a resolution commemorating the 100th anniversary of the National Governors Association.

It is my hope we will be able to clear this resolution honoring the 100th anniversary this evening. As former Governors currently serving in the Senate, Senators BAYH, BOND, GREGG, and BEN NELSON will also be joining myself and Senator ALEXANDER, along with Senator ROCKEFELLER, in sponsoring this resolution.

If you think about it, that is all of the former Governors who now serve in the Senate and who were at one time members of the National Governors Association. I was privileged to serve, along with Senators VOINOVICH and ALEXANDER, as chairman of the National Governors Association at one time.

It is a special privilege for me to take a moment to reflect on the organization’s growth and its accomplishments over the last 100 years. On May 15, 1908, 100 years ago today, President Teddy Roosevelt hosted the first meeting of our Nation’s Governors at the