

# Bigger Media? Bad idea.



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**A handful of companies get to decide the majority of what we see, hear and read.**

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**That's a lot of control in just a few hands.** Six giant conglomerates - Viacom, CBS, Disney, Time Warner, News Corp. and General Electric - control the big four networks, most cable channels, as well as vast holdings in radio, publishing, movie studios, music, Internet and other sectors. Comcast, Clear Channel and a few others round out the A-list of media monoliths. **These corporations use the publicly owned air-waves - for free -** to make billions in profits. In exchange for this generous handout, media providers are supposed to offer programming that meets the needs of local and diverse communities.

- Instead, these companies produce cheap, cookie-cutter programming, gut local newsrooms and feed us shows packed with commercials.
- To keep the government and advertisers on their side, they've made sure to steer clear of controversial issues.

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**Now the FCC wants to let Big Media get even bigger.**

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**Right now** the Federal Communications Commission is considering rules that could change how many radio and television stations one company can own in a single place, and whether one company should be allowed to own television or radio stations *and* the major daily newspaper in the same city.

- The FCC tried this in 2003 but was blocked by the courts after millions voiced their opposition. **Now they're trying again.**

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**Their actions could hand over even more TV and radio stations to Big Media - squeezing out local voices.**

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**One media conglomerate** could potentially own the major daily newspaper, eight radio stations and three TV stations in a single city such as Seattle, Tacoma, Spokane or Yakima. This would have devastating consequences for localism and diversity.

- **Local accountability:** Big Media are not accountable to the communities they serve. They ignore important local issues, provide poor coverage of local elections, and sideline local voices.
- **Diversity:** Female and minority station owners - already few in number - are extremely vulnerable to efforts by Big Media companies to dominate local markets.

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**Take action! Let's speak out for media that's healthy for our community, our culture, and our democracy.**

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## **Seattle FCC Hearing**

The FCC's final public hearing on media consolidation will be held in Seattle this November - on a date not yet announced.

It's our chance to make sure they consider our need for diversity, local accountability and quality journalism, before changing the rules for the worse!

Visit [reclaimthedia.org](http://reclaimthedia.org) for:

- Hearing updates
- More on the issues
- Info on testimony-preparation workshops



# Getting Ready for the FCC: Four Points to Remember

In 2003, despite a completely unprecedented public outcry, the Federal Communications Commission voted 3-2 to weaken the media ownership rules. This decision would have allowed Big Media companies to gobble up even more local stations. The courts ultimately rejected the FCC's deregulation and sent the FCC back to the drawing board.

**Now the FCC is getting ready to decide the fate of our media democracy once again.** They've heard from the Big Media companies, who want them to get rid of all the rules limiting media monopolies and consolidation. They've also heard from millions of ordinary Americans from across the political spectrum who have spoken up in favor of media policies that support quality journalism, diverse voices and local accountability. After the Seattle hearing, the five commissioners will return to DC and soon decide how, and to what extent, broadcast ownership rules should be changed. As FCC Commissioner Michael Copps has warned, "They screwed it up once. Believe me, they're 100 percent capable of screwing it up again."

**That's why it's crucial for us to weigh in now.** Here are four points to keep in mind about media consolidation:

## 1) Big Media stifles viewpoints.

When one company buys multiple media outlets in one city or town, or dominates a niche such as Spanish-language media, that single owner gains huge influence over the information a community has access to. Big corporations push out other media outlets that may offer competing points of view. That means less diversity of voices and a narrower range of debate.

## 2) Big Media doesn't serve local communities.

In exchange for their free use of the public airwaves, TV and radio broadcasters are supposed to serve the public interest. Yet they often ignore important local issues, pander to racism and sensationalism, provide poor coverage of local elections, and marginalize or ignore local voices. As local stations get bought up by big, national corporations with centralized operations, reporters or DJs lose their jobs - and stations become even less accountable to the communities they serve.

## 3) Big Media ignores diversity.

Corporate media conglomerates are more concerned with profit than with responsible programming. The needs of people of color, working families and rural citizens are sidelined - because these people aren't advertisers' target audiences.

## 4) We need diverse, local ownership of the media.

Without reasonable ownership limits, giant national and international corporations will buy up more and more local stations and eliminate diverse, local and independent programming in the interest of profit. If the FCC is serious about fostering local accountability and diversity on the airwaves, it must preserve existing rules, and enact further protections against consolidated corporate ownership.

Media policies have favored powerful corporations over local communities for too long. For decades, the the FCC and Congress have been in the pocket of Big Media, while the public has been ignored. As the FCC rewrites its ownership rules and Congress debates legislation that will shape the entire media system for years to come, it's time our government officials listened to the public, not just Big Media lobbyists.