

Fight for the Air

"Serve the Public Interest"

By Sue Wilson

Just when we thought media consolidation couldn't get any worse, it could, depending on who wins the Presidency — and the Congress — in November.

Media consolidation is fraught with politics. Because radio and TV signals literally travel through our air, the federal government licenses broadcast companies to use our air — but only if they serve our interest — “the public interest.” This is not just passing fancy. Since 1934, that public interest obligation has been enshrined in legislation passed by Congress and signed into law by the President of the United States.

Exactly what that means has shifted through the years. Congress changed broadcast law over time so today one corporation may license as many Radio frequencies nationally as it can acquire. Due to that legislation, once richly independent Radio is now extremely consolidated by a few mega-corporations who choose to air chosen musicians and pro-GOP political talk.

Early congressional acts limited TV broadcasters to license just three stations — nationwide. Over time, Congress, instead, created a “National Audience Cap” restricting TV licensees to reach only 39% of the viewing public with their signals to prevent domination of which information the airwave-owning public can access.

For decades, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) sets the Rules for how broadcasters must comply with the laws. One FCC Rule limits the number of local Radio stations licensed in one [Designated Market Area](#) (DMA) to as few as five and as many as eight, depending on community size. Another allows a single broadcast corporation to license just two local TV stations in the same DMA.

Those rules can be changed not only by the whim of who the current President appoints to head the FCC, but by regulators schmoozed by broadcasters into changing rules — like allowing one broadcaster to operate stations licensed by another to conceal who really controls station programming. Today, huge broadcasters like Sinclair and Nexstar control not just the two local TV stations legally allowed in one community, but four - and often three of the Big Four Networks (ABC, CBS, FOX, NBC).

Sinclair is cutting or eliminating local news altogether. They are replacing it with its partisan slanted program “The National Desk” - which now is spreading Republican National

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Sue Wilson at an anti-Rush Limbaugh rally in 2009.



graphic: Broadcast Blues

committee backed anti-Harris propaganda to its local viewers in 86 local areas.

However, the recent Supreme Court decision in *Loper Bright Enterprises v Raimondo* is putting this entire model in jeopardy. SCOTUS decided it is not the job of Federal Regulators to interpret laws, but rather that of the Courts. According to Radio/Television Business Report, “Just 18 days after the Supreme Court’s 6-3 decision to end the ‘Chevron deference,’ the National Association of Broadcasters has filed an initial brief in its challenge to the FCC’s local radio and television ownership restrictions.”

Now the only way to ensure We the People are served by the airwaves we own is for our representatives to immediately pass real laws to protect our interests. Legislation is the answer – and which legislators are elected in November will be key to whether media works for the People — or for giant corporations.

Legislative Priorities:

- Do not allow one Radio corporation to license unlimited numbers of radio stations nationally.
- Do not allow one TV corporation to license more than four stations in the same TV market.
- Do not allow one TV company to license or operate two, three, even four network stations in the same TV market.
- Discontinue Shared Service and Joint Sales Agreements which conceal who truly controls content.
- Legislate a simple “Right to Respond” so We who own the airwaves can engage in discourse and defend ourselves from personal attacks. Why did the Sandy Hook parents have to sue Alex Jones for defamation to have their righteous grievances heard? Why weren't they simply allowed equal time on the radio?

It is our air. Now is the moment to fight for it.

Hyperlinks for this article at <https://bit.ly/47cSMA0t>

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