Democratic Representatives who currently serve in those districts, to be reelected. That is not what we call democracy, Mr. Speaker. That is what we call a very partisan power grab.

The heroes from the State House of Representatives in Texas who went to Ardmore, Oklahoma, this week have been criticized by many on the other side of the aisle. They have said that they should be in Austin carrying out the people's business, they should be there to vote on the legislation which is before them. But interestingly, I heard none of those same complaints just last week when the majority leader of this body decided it was more important to be in Austin, Texas, to lobby for his secret redistricting plan instead of being here in Washington, D.C., along with the rest of us voting on the legislation which was before us. I heard nobody from the other side of the aisle rise to the podium and say the majority leader should be here in Washington, D.C., carrying on and representing his district back home.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RODRIGUEZ addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GONZALEZ addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STENHOLM addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. REYES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ORTIZ addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE GROWING CONCENTRATION OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. 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, in my view the issue that I and some of my colleagues are about to discuss, which is concentration of ownership in the media and the implications of more media deregulation as proposed by the Bush administration and FCC Chairman Michael Powell, is one of the very most important issues facing this country. One of the ways that we can know how important this issue is is precisely by how relatively little media attention has been paid to it. The growing concentration of corporate ownership of media in the United States is in fact one of the least discussed major issues in this country because the media itself is in a major conflict of interest and chooses not to discuss it.

As bad as the situation is today, and when we examine this chart we will find out how bad it is, how few major multinational conglomerates like Viacom, AOL Time Warner, Disney, Clear Channel, News Corporation and a few others, to what degree a few major corporations control what we see, hear and read, as bad as it is, it is likely to become much worse, much more dangerous for the future of democracy in this country if, as is proposed on June 2, the FCC votes for further media deregulation, regulations that have been on the books for years to protect localism, to protect diversity of opinion, to protect the clash of ideas.

Needless to say, there are many people and many organizations all across this country regardless of political orientation who are strongly opposed to changing these regulations and who do not want to see more media consolidation in this country. Millions of Americans do not want to see the handful of corporations who determine what we see, hear and read become three, become two, become one perhaps as a result of mergers and takeovers. These groups range across the political spectrum from progressive groups to conservative groups. According to the Associated Press yesterday, and I quote, ''The National Rifle Association joined the ranks of consumer groups, musicians, writers and academics who oppose easing the restrictions.

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''The NRA asked its members to write Powell,'' that is the FCC Chairman, ''and lawmakers in support of the existing rules, said Wayne LaPierre, the NRA's executive vice president.'' Quote from Mr. LaPierre: ''These big media conglomerates are already pushing out diversity of political opinion.''

Further, we have heard recently from organizations representing black broadcasters and Latino broadcasters. We have heard from musicians. We have heard from a wide spectrum of people who say what America is about is freedom, and we cannot have freedom if we do not have a clash of ideas. And it will be very dangerous for this country when a tiny number of multi-multibillion-dollar international conglomerates own virtually all of our newspapers, all of our radio stations, all of our television stations, all of our book publishing companies, all of the companies that produce the films that we observe.

At issue now is the FCC's review of rules that seek to protect localism so that back home they will have local news, that there will be a local radio station telling them what is going on in their community, that will preserve competition and diversity. These rules, among other things, currently limit a single corporation from dominating local TV markets. Do people want to live in a community where all of the local television stations are owned by one company? These rules that we have in place right now will prevent the merging of local television stations, radio stations, and a newspaper. Do people want to live in a community where one company owns their local TV station, owns the newspaper and owns radio stations? Do they think they are going to hear different points of view when that happens?

These regulations deal with the merging of two major television networks so that we will have just a few networks controlling all of the TV stations facing our country. Honest people might have differences of opinion on this issue, but one would think that there would be massive amounts of public discussion all over America. I can tell the Members that in my small State, the State of Vermont, which is one of the smallest States in this country, we recently had a town meeting on this issue, and 600 people came out to hear FCC Commissioner Michael Copps talk about that issue. We should be having town meetings like that all over America, and in my view and in the view of many of us in Congress, the FCC should delay making any decisions on June 2 and let the American people get involved in the process.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege now to yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) who has been very active on this issue. I thank the gentlewoman for being with us.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am here today to join my colleagues and to thank the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) for pulling this evening together so that we can speak out against a threat to America. It is not a threat to American lives, but a threat to American values. It is a threat to everything that this Nation stands for, every principle that this Nation was founded on, and every memory of every soldier that has fought and died or been harmed for the free exchange of ideas.