

those of us in politics, and I am sure every Member, all 435, have a gripe about a television station. I do, too. Probably about a radio station. Probably a gripe with a newspaper. We all do.

But the idea that we are going to offer an amendment to somehow corral a decision or overturn a decision that was made by the FCC, I think is not right.

□ 1700

I represent Adams County in Illinois where Quincy, Illinois, is the largest community and there is a family-owned newspaper there. The Oakley family owns the newspaper, and they own at least one television station in that town and several other television stations around the country; and they are a good corporate citizen, and they do not dictate policy from one station to another. They do not dictate policy from their newspaper to their television stations. So I guess they are the exception to the rule that one can own a newspaper and own a television station, several television stations, and not dictate policy and still be a good corporate citizen.

The classic example, though, is the Tribune Company. The Tribune Company has been in operation for 150 years. It operates in 12 markets, and it owns the Los Angeles Times, the Baltimore Sun, the Chicago Tribune, Newsday. It owns Channel 9 and many other television stations, and the notion that they try and dictate policy or dictate opinion I think is not accurate. I know that they have established themselves as one of the best corporate citizens, certainly in Chicago and in many other communities.

So the idea that we are going to have an amendment to overturn a decision that was made by the FCC because somebody does not like it or that television stations are too big or might dictate policy, I think, is not a true reflection of at least two I know, one in Quincy, Illinois, and one in Chicago, that has many outlets in many different places.

For that reason, I wish we could have defeated the Obey amendment, which we did not; but I hope we can defeat the Hinchey amendment which is even worse.

The CHAIRMAN pro tempore (Mr. TERRY). The Committee will rise informally.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. COBLE) assumed the Chair.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

A message in writing from the President of the United States was communicated to the House by Ms. Wanda Evans, one of his secretaries.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Committee will resume its sitting.

DEPARTMENTS OF COMMERCE, JUSTICE, AND STATE, THE JUDICIARY, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS ACT, 2004

The Committee resumed its sitting.

Mr. MEEHAN. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

I rise to oppose the amendment, and I agree with much of the substance of this amendment; but I am concerned about the provisions with regard to newspapers.

Mr. Chairman, there used to be a time in every major city in America where we had three, four, five vibrant newspapers. Today, what we are seeing is fewer and fewer newspapers across the country. We are seeing circulation of newspapers going down and the economic viability of newspapers reduced dramatically because of the inability of newspapers to compete economically.

I know something about this because my father worked at the local newspaper in my hometown for 43 years. He was not the publisher. He was not the editor. He was not even a reporter. He punched a clock as compositor for 43 years, and that local newspaper meant a lot to our community.

I believe that the provisions regarding cross-ownership for newspapers would do serious harm to the financial viability of local newspapers with disastrous consequences for journalism. In a world where 24-hour cable news and Internet have made news sources for information widely available, we still depend, and our democracy depends, upon newspapers to provide high-quality, in-depth coverage of local news events; but with the emergence of so many alternative sources of news and entertainment, newspapers are struggling to retain advertisers who want to reach a high-quality, fragmented audience of consumers.

Newspapers are getting hit from both directions because they are losing circulation, viewers, and advertisers to broadcasters and major news media. The FCC's decision to relax the cross-ownership rules with regard to newspapers was based on extensive evidence showing that when newspapers are allowed to participate in local broadcasting, consumers benefit.

Daily newspapers almost always have the most extensive and sophisticated news-gathering apparatus in their circulation area. So this should not be surprising. Newspapers have been used in classrooms across America to discuss local issues. So when co-owned broadcast stations are able to draw on the depth and breadth of newspaper expertise, the stations can produce better local news programming; and when newspapers make their pitch to advertisers, they can say that they reach consumers across their circulation area through radio or, in some instances, TV ads as well as print.

The FCC did not have to guess what would happen with the quality of local news under lax cross-ownership rules

with regard to newspapers. Several local newspaper/broadcast combinations have been in operation since the 1970s under the grandfather rules. This experience shows that broadcast stations, co-owned with daily newspapers, are offering better local news and more of it.

Studies by both media owners and independent entities agree on these benefits. For example, a 5-year study by the Project for Excellence in Journalism at Columbia University, found that co-owned stations were more likely to do stories focused on important community issues and were more likely to provide a wide mix of opinion. Other studies show that existing newspaper/broadcast combinations do not coordinate the editorial views they express on important public issues.

The health of daily newspapers across this country is absolutely critical to the functioning of our democracy because newspapers offer by far the most extensive and consistent coverage of local political issues and public policy issues. That is why I believe the FCC's decision to allow more newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership is good public policy.

While I agree with many of the provisions in this particular amendment and also the gentleman from Wisconsin's (Mr. OBEY) amendment, the relaxation of a cross-ownership ban for newspapers will serve the public interest by fostering better newspapers and information; and I base that on my experience in dealing with local newspapers in my own district and my own family's involvement in 43 years.

I might also add, since there have been other issues such as overtime, when my father worked as an hourly employee for 43 years punching a time clock every day, whether or not we took a vacation that summer was determined by his ability to earn overtime at that newspaper. Fortunately, he was able to make the overtime payments because of the ability of that newspaper to provide a quality of life for the employees.

Mr. INSLEE. Mr. Chairman, I move to strike the requisite number of words.

Mr. Chairman, I rise in strong support for this amendment for the simple reason that a monopoly of ideas is ultimately more destructive to American democracy than even a monopoly of money; and the American people understand this amendment should pass for two reasons, one philosophical and one practical. Let me address the philosophical one first.

In the words of Thomas Jefferson, who said, "Were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers, or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter," the overwhelming majority of American people have an understanding in their gut and in their bones and in their heads that if we loosen the rules on media consolidation, we will