
**Technology, Energy &
Communications Committee**

HJM 4028

Brief Description: Requesting that the United States Congress pass the Media Ownership Act.

Sponsors: Representatives Wallace and Hasegawa.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Condemns the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC) decision on December 18, 2007, to expand newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership and the process that the FCC followed in delivering their decision.
- Asks the U.S. Congress to work in a nonpartisan manner to pass the Media Ownership Act.

Hearing Date: 1/30/08

Staff: Scott Richards (786-7156).

Background:

Federal Communications Commission

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is an independent United States government agency charged with regulating interstate and international communications by radio, television, wire, satellite, and cable. The FCC has jurisdiction over the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and United States possessions.

The FCC Regulation of Newspaper and Broadcast Cross-Ownership

In 2007 the FCC held six hearings around the country to receive public input from individuals, broadcasters and corporations. In December 18, 2007, the FCC delivered a decision amending newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership rules to allow a newspaper to own one television station or one radio station in the 20 largest markets in the United States.

Media Ownership Act of 2007: House of Representatives (H.R.) 4835 and Senate (S.) 2332

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

During the fall of 2007, H.R. 4835 and S. 2332 were introduced by members of the U.S. Congress. Both congressional bills seek to amend the Telecommunications Act of 1996 to require the FCC, in changing any of its regulations related to broadcast ownership, to publish notice in the Federal Register for least 90 days, followed by at least 60 days for public comment, followed by at least 30 days to reply to comments. Applies those requirements to any changes related to broadcast and newspaper ownership made after October 1, 2007.

Both H.R. 4835 and S. 2332 require the FCC, before voting on any change in broadcast and newspaper ownership rules, to complete a separate rulemaking to promote the broadcast of local programming and content by broadcasters, including radio and television broadcast stations, and newspapers. Requires the FCC, before issuing a final rule, to: (1) conduct a study on the overall impact of television station duopolies and newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership on the quantity and quality of local news, public affairs, local news media jobs, and local cultural programming at the market level; and (2) publish a proposed final rule at least 90 days before a vote, followed by at least 60 days for public comment, followed by at least 30 days to reply to comments.

Both H.R. 4835 and S. 2332 require the FCC to establish an independent panel on increasing the representation of women and minorities in broadcast media ownership and to act on the panel's recommendations before voting on any changes to its broadcast and newspaper ownership rules.

Summary of Bill:

The Washington Legislature recognizes that the FCC ignored repeated pleas of the American people and their representatives in the U.S. Congress to defer their newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership decision and conduct a more inclusive process before amending the rules.

The Washington Legislature condemns the FCC decision to expand newspaper-broadcast cross-ownership and the process that the FCC followed in delivering their decision.

The Washington Legislature prays that the U.S. Congress work in a nonpartisan manner to pass the Media Ownership Act that overturns FCC decisions after October 1, 2007, ensures that future FCC regulatory processes are open to and inclusive of the American people, and provides improved opportunities for people of color and women to participate as media outlet owners.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.