

10 QUESTIONS about MEDIA

to ask every candidate and elected official

CONSOLIDATION

The United States has seen a massive wave of media consolidation over the past two decades. For example, Time Warner alone — in addition to its cable empire reaching 11 million subscribers — controls over 100 magazines, dozens of television networks and record companies, as well as major publishing, Internet, TV and movie production companies.

Do you support setting limits on media consolidation — through antitrust law and ownership protections — to prevent large companies from having too much control over what Americans see, hear and read?

CABLE RATES

Over the past 5 years, cable rates have risen over 40% nationwide. This is the direct result of government-granted monopolies and lack of competition. The government has stalled on setting reasonable cable ownership limits. Meanwhile, cable companies are increasing their profits as they eliminate communities' ability to negotiate public interest-oriented cable agreements.

Will you promote consumer choice by setting limits on cable ownership and by supporting policies to encourage the development of competition in cable markets?

NONCOMMERCIAL MEDIA

Democratic discourse requires quality sources of information free from advertiser pressure. However, we provide less funding per capita for public broadcasting than most other industrialized countries — by a wide margin.

Do you support policies that would increase and preserve funding for public and non-commercial media, and eliminate commercial sponsorship of public radio and TV programs?

CAMPAIGN COVERAGE

The skyrocketing cost of buying ad time is a major reason candidates raise ever-higher sums of money from wealthy special interests. In the 2004 cycle, TV broadcasters — who are given licenses to use publicly-owned airwaves for free — set a record by raking in an estimated \$1.5 billion from political ads. At the same time, news coverage of campaigns has plummeted.

Do you support requiring broadcasters to provide significant free airtime for candidates and public debates as a condition of receiving their government-granted licenses?

INTERNET FREEDOM

The Internet exploded over the past decade in part because Internet Service Providers were required by law to allow access to all websites and users without discrimination. Big cable and telephone companies now want to restrict what users and providers can and cannot access, all in the name of profit.

Do you support open access rules that keep the Internet free and open, and that protect individual privacy from both government and corporations alike?

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MARKETING TOWARD KIDS

Our children today are bombarded with advertising. Parents, teachers, and organizations dedicated to children's issues are growing increasingly concerned as evidence mounts connecting media exposure to a variety of health and behavior problems.

Do you support efforts to reduce commercialism and predatory marketing toward children, and to promote noncommercial educational TV programming for young children?

COMMUNITY RADIO

Many communities find themselves and their concerns misrepresented by major broadcasters. Citizens need to hear their own voices over their own airwaves, and the capability exists to fulfill this demand. Legislation is pending that would create thousands of new low-power FM radio licenses.

Do you support giving more communities the ability to broadcast their own locally-based programming through an expanded low-power radio and television service?

MINORITY OWNERSHIP

Minority ownership of media is at a 10-year low, down 14% since 1997. Today, only 4% of radio stations and 1.9% of television stations are minority-owned. And studies show that the glass ceiling for women is firmly in place at communications companies.

Do you support providing incentives to increase diversity in media ownership and leadership?

MEDIA WORKERS

Media consolidation pressures media workers to abandon their professional values in order to generate maximum short-term profits. Trade unions are especially important in media industries because they serve both to protect the rights of workers and to insulate the media's role in our democracy from economic pressure.

Do you support laws that make it easier for media workers to form trade unions and ensure they are paid for their overtime?

COPYRIGHT

Large corporations are buying protection from new competition and technological innovation. No copyrighted work created after 1922 has entered the public domain — an incubator for new ideas — due to legislation extending copyright terms. If laws being considered today had been in effect a few generations ago, consumers might not have access to products such as VCRs and copiers.

Do you support policies that will shorten the terms of copyright and lend balance to the law by allowing fair use for nonprofit and noncommercial purposes?