

Opening Statement of Chairman Greg Walden  
Subcommittee on Communications and Technology  
Broadcasting Ownership in the 21st Century  
September 25, 2015

Good morning and welcome to today's hearing on broadcasting ownership in the 21st century. For the last century, broadcasting and newspapers have been the media that connect communities. Whether it's the local radio call-in show that amplifies the voices of average citizens, the local television news that's "live, local, and late-breaking," or the newspaper column that has everyone talking, broadcasters and newspapers are a part of our communities. These voices have served as the primary way Americans' news needs were met for the majority of our republic's history, but times have changed.

The current broadcast ownership laws reflect a significantly different time in American history. Cable, satellite, and the Internet have become integral parts of our communications infrastructure and our daily lives, changing the way we consume news and giving national scope to their voices. But despite the massive changes to the communications marketplace and American consumption of news, our laws are stuck in a bygone era.

Our laws were written for an era of limited voices. But this is an era of communications competition. Competition between broadcast news and cable news; competition between print journalism and online journalism; and competition between traditional media and new media. In an era of such intense competition, our laws should not unduly hamper the ability of any one segment to provide the high-quality content consumers have relied on for decades.

But that's exactly what our laws do. Our laws limit the number of households a broadcast station group can reach; our laws hold on to artificial distinctions between AM and FM radio stations; and our laws prevent broadcasters dedicated to serving their communities from saving local newspapers from extinction. These laws must change.

While we work to change the laws to empower broadcasting and newspapers for a new era of American media, we must also look to empower our nation's minorities in the traditional media marketplace. Despite the wealth of voices and viewpoints in our society, ownership of traditional media by minorities remains low. Empowering broadcasting for the 21<sup>st</sup> century means embracing policies that diversify it to reflect the society it serves. I look forward to hearing from our witnesses on ways that we can encourage greater minority ownership in broadcasting.

We all share the same goal of promoting localism in our communities. Broadcasters and newspapers play a critical role in ensuring Americans have reliable news sources and work to bring us all together whether you live in the largest city or on the most rural of ranches. As technology continues to change our society, it is important that we ensure our laws keep pace. Our priority should be to encourage innovation and diversity within communities without placing more restrictions on businesses. I thank our witnesses for being here today and offering your valuable input.