

Statement for the Record of Rep. Anna G. Eshoo
Lifting Voices: Legislation to Promote Media Marketplace Diversity
House Subcommittee on Communications and Technology
2322 Rayburn House Office Building
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Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing.

An independent and diverse media that reflects the population it serves is critical for the health of our democracy and society. This should be the starting point for today's hearing. The Declaration of Rights of the Commonwealth of Virginia, which served as inspiration for our First Amendment's press freedom, states directly that "the freedom of the press is one of the great bulwarks of liberty, and can never be restrained but by despotic governments." This is an eloquent statement underscoring *why* we need a free press.

However, our constitutional right to a free press is a foundation we must build upon. Our goal ought to be a media ecosystem that reflects the make-up of our country, and on this goal, we're failing.

Looking at traditional broadcast stations, which the FCC collects robust data on, we see myriad problems. To reflect the population, women should own about half of the broadcast stations. The FCC's most recent report on broadcast ownership finds that, in fact, women own less than 10 percent of full power TV, AM, and FM stations.

The Census estimates that 18.3 percent of Americans are Hispanic or Latino, yet they own 5 percent or less of full power commercial TV, AM, and FM stations. The situation is similarly problematic for African Americans, Asian Americans, Native Americans, and Native Hawaiians. Things get much worse when the intersection of gender and race is considered. Exactly one full power TV station is owned by an African American woman, according to the FCC's most recent report.

I support legislative efforts to increase diversity in ownership of broadcast stations, cable and satellite TV distributors, as the legislation before us aims to do. This is why I've cosponsored two pieces of legislation we're considering:

- H.Res. 549, *Reaffirming the commitment to media diversity and pledging to work with media entities and diverse stakeholders to develop common ground solutions to eliminate barriers to media diversity*, which clearly articulates that media diversity is an important goal; and
- H.R. 3957, the *Expanding Broadcast Ownership Opportunities Act of 2019*, which reinstates a tax certificate to encourage ownership of broadcast media by women and people of color.

Finally, I want to say a few words about issues that are not part of the scope of today's discussion, but impact media diversity and ought to be priorities for our Committee. The consolidation of ownership within the largest broadcast networks and cable companies in our country is a growing challenge that intensifies the lack of media diversity. Beyond ownership,

media companies employ too few employees, especially those ‘on air,’ who are women or people of color. The media that young Americans are flocking to – YouTube, Instagram, SnapChat, TikTok, and other apps – democratized content creation in many ways but have not made as much progress on diversity as was once hoped. Too often, top content creators on these platforms don’t reflect their viewership, and to achieve a truly diverse media marketplace, we’ll need to consider all of these issues and more.

I thank the witnesses for being with us today, and I look forward to a productive hearing.