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Future of Music Coalition

International Music Managers' Forum  
Louisiana Music Commission  
Recording Academy  
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## **ARTIST GROUPS INSIST PUBLIC VOICES BE HEARD ON PROPOSED MEDIA OWNERSHIP RULE CHANGES**

WASHINGTON – In a letter sent today, a diverse group of over thirty recording artists urged FCC Chairman Michael Powell to grant Congress and the public a full opportunity to review any proposed changes of media ownership rules before they are enacted.

The letter cites four published reports containing empirical evidence that media ownership rules are necessary. The letter also suggests there is overwhelming proof that the public wants limits held in place. Empirical evidence is the standard the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit requires the FCC to meet in showing the existing rules are necessary.

“I am pleased to join dozens of my fellow musicians who are calling for a more open policy process,” said Eagles songwriter and recording artist Don Henley. “As artists, we recognize the important role that radio and other media play in the vitality of the American culture. It is outrageous that many citizens are not even aware these changes are being debated. To a large extent, this is because the FCC leadership has not fully engaged the public. But what frightens me more is the complete absence of any network coverage of this issue. The broadcast interests who clearly stand to benefit from further consolidation have seemingly absolved themselves of their responsibility to cover this proceeding as a news story. If this is the sort of biased coverage we get now, I can’t imagine what will pass as journalism in the next phase of our increasingly consolidated media future.”

The letter cites a study by the Future of Music Coalition, which provides compelling evidence that radio consolidation has resulted in reduced marketplace competition, reduced programming diversity and the homogenization of playlists, reduced public access to the airwaves for local programming, and reduced public satisfaction with listening options.

“There are clear lessons from the dramatic consolidation of ownership in the radio industry following the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and how it has impacted the historic goals of localism, competition and diversity. It is less clear whether all the FCC Commissioners are interested in exploring what those lessons are,” said Ann Chaitovitz, Director of Sound Recordings at The American Federation of Television and Radio Artists (AFTRA).

The letter also cites a December 2002 Center for Economic and Policy Research and Department for Professional Employees/AFL-CIO critique of twelve studies commissioned by the FCC to examine media ownership issues. The report raised serious questions about the impact of concentration on diversity of news and entertainment and indicated that there is little basis for believing that substitution between types of media will offset any negative effects from concentration in a specific medium.

“The media rules under debate at the FCC determine how citizens receive their news, information and entertainment,” said Michael Bracy, Director of Government Relations, Future of Music Coalition. “It’s critical for the continued health of our democracy that there be full public debate about the potential impact of these rules.”

In the letter, the artists also mention the lack of participation by Chairman Powell and Commissioners Abernathy and Martin in field hearings designed to increase public participation and comments on proposed rule changes. “I have attended field hearings in New York, Richmond, Durham, and Seattle, and I have heard testimony from hundreds of citizens who are concerned about the direction the FCC is heading,” said Jenny Toomey, Executive Director, Future of Music Coalition. “I have read through thousands of public comments in the FCC docket. The overwhelming majority of those who have come forward urge Chairman Powell to maintain the existing cross ownership caps. It is abundantly clear that the only supporters of this fast-track deregulation are the very corporations who will benefit financially from further consolidation. If the FCC has any clear mandate it is to protect the public interest from these private interests.”

Signing on to the letter were: Jackson Browne, Jimmy Buffett, David Crosby, Neil Diamond, John Doe, Don Henley, Indigo Girls (Amy Ray and Emily Saliers), Billy Joel, Lenny Kaye, Toby Keith, Ian MacKaye, Ray Manzarek, Ellis L. Marsalis, Jr., Mya, Tim McGraw, Paul D. Miller, Sam Moore, Thurston Moore, Stevie Nicks, Joan Osborne, Van Dyke Parks, Pearl Jam, Sandy Pearlman, Tom Petty, Bonnie Raitt, Kevin Richardson, Patti Smith, Stephan Smith, Michael Stipe, Tom Waits, Jennifer Warnes, Saul Williams, and Nancy Wilson.

View the musicians’ letter to Commissioner Powell here:  
<http://www.futureofmusic.org/news/FCCmusicianletter.cfm>

This page also provides links to all the reports referenced in the letter and this news release.

In addition, the Future of Music Coalition has built a web page to allow other concerned musicians to co-sign the letter. <http://www.futureofmusic.org/news/FCCmusicianletter.cfm>

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