

November 30, 2006

Federal Communications Commissioners  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

**Re: Testimony of Seattle City Councilmember Jean Godden, Chair of Seattle City Council's Energy and Technology Committee, given at an FCC public hearing at the Seattle Public Library on November 30, 2006**

Greetings:

My thanks to Federal Communications Commissioners Adelstein and Cobb for giving Seattleites an opportunity to speak on this matter of grave concern to all who value an informed citizenry.

As a career journalist and now as an elected member of the Seattle City Council, I am perhaps more alarmed than most over proposals for an unprecedented consolidation of media. In recent years, consolidation already has drastically reduced the independent avenues of communication in this country. To allow more consolidation through the ability to own TV and radio stations as well as newspapers in a single market is a scary prospect for a free people.

In past years, we, in the Seattle metropolitan region, have been fortunate. We have had access to more independent outlets than most. But we, too, have seen consolidation among papers and the electronic media. The number of independent voices has been slowly but drastically reduced. Many voices have been silenced forever.

Recognizing that loss, the Seattle City Council on November 27, 2006, joined a coalition of consumer, public interest, media reform and organized labor groups and passed Resolution # 30937 supporting a Bill of Media Rights. This resolution is not a first; it builds upon a 2003 City Council Resolution # 30581. It rightly observes that "a free and vibrant media, comprised of diverse voices and opinions, is the lifeblood of American democracy."

The resolution quotes a U. S. Supreme Court ruling that the First Amendment protects the public's right to "an uninhibited marketplace of ideas in which truth with prevail" and calls for "suitable access to social, political, esthetic, moral and other ideas and experiences." The court affirmed that it is "the right of viewers and listeners, not the right of broadcasters, which is paramount."

What matters greatly to this city is a parallel concern: wrongheaded attempts to limit the ability of local governments to negotiate with their cable providers. It was through such negotiations that, earlier this year, Seattle was able to expand provision for a citizen access network. The franchise agreement provides free access to the internet for schools, low-income and immigrant communities. Finally it enables Seattle's municipal channel, tops in the nation, to offer 12 hours a week of arts programming for the next 10 years.

Without local oversight in these areas, we may not be able to preserve small, independent voices that are essential in a democracy. It is not "freedom from," but "freedom for;" not the right to broadcast and publish, but the right to be informed that is at the heart of the First Amendment.

Commissioners Adelstein and Cobb, I want to thank you for your work on this issue and for listening to Seattle's citizens regarding their concerns on this issue. On behalf of the Seattle City Council, I am here to ask the commission to act in the public's interest. The Seattle City Council urges the commissioners to preserve and protect a multitude of voices, rather than granting monopoly rights to those who can own a broadcast station using the public airwaves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jean Godden". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jean Godden  
Seattle City Councilmember  
Energy and Technology Committee Chair