

Media Ownership Reform Act (MORA)

Congressman Maurice Hinchey (NY-22)

THE PROBLEM

The American media is becoming increasingly dominated by large telecommunications companies that are pressuring smaller companies out of the market and shrinking the diversity of voices in our media environment.

- Since the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Congress and the Federal Communications Commission have repeatedly altered our nation's media ownership rules by increasing media ownership caps that limit the number of media outlets one company is permitted to own in a single market. The result has been greater consolidation in the media industry, with telecommunications giants buying up more and more television and radio stations, newspapers, and other media outlets, forcing local and independent media owners to be bought up or go out of business, and denying public access to a wide array of information.
- As part of a large deregulation process in 1987, the Reagan administration dissolved the Fairness Doctrine, an important piece of legislation that required broadcast news programs to cover controversial topics in a fair and balanced manner. First introduced in 1949, the Fairness Doctrine's suspension was a massive blow to journalistic integrity, forcing the general public to lose trust in media outlets from which they receive news and information each day.

THE SOLUTION

- Congressman Hinchey introduced the Media Ownership Reform Act, which seeks to restore integrity and diversity to America's media system by significantly lowering media ownership caps. These caps will keep the power and influence of large telecommunications companies under control and encourage smaller businesses to participate and compete, bringing a greater diversity of viewpoints into media programming.
- MORA also reinstates Cable/Broadcast Cross-Ownership rules, which forbid any company from owning and operating a broadcast station and a cable station in the same market, limiting the influence of that company on the various media outlets.
- The bill also restores the Fairness Doctrine, compelling broadcast news outlets to investigate issues thoroughly and present their findings in an unbiased way.