

June 12, 2009

Media and Democracy Coalition
1133 19th Street NW, 9th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

Senator John D. Rockefeller IV
Chairman, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Senate
253 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Rockefeller,

Attached are a series of questions submitted for the Committee to aid in its examination of the new nominees for the Federal Communications Commission. I am submitting these on behalf of a variety of groups that represent the public interest in communications policy:

The Leadership Conference on Civil Rights
Prometheus Radio Project
United Church of Christ Office of Communication, Inc.
Media Access Project
Public Knowledge
The Center for Rural Strategies

If I can be of assistance, or for further information, please contact me at 202-736-5757 or at hmiller@media-democracy.net. We hope these will be of use.

Thank you.

Sincerely,
Hannah Miller
Media and Democracy Coalition

CC: Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison
Senator John Ensign
Senator John Kerry

As the Commerce Committee prepares to undergo the confirmation process for President Barack Obama's nominees to the Federal Communications Commission, we, as organizations with decades of experience advocating for the public interest in communications and media policy, urge the Committee to address with the nominees the most pressing public-interest concerns we see the FCC facing in the years ahead.

In general, we hope that all nominees can share their comments on the role of the FCC, without prejudging a particular rulemaking or adjudication without seeing the record before him or her.

We respectfully submit these questions to the Committee to use as a tool in developing its own inquiry, and hope that introducing these topics into the public debate will spur clear and thoughtful answers from all the nominees. Any answers will be shared back with our members and made available on our organization's websites.

BROADBAND:

- Do you think access to broadband has become a fundamental prerequisite for economic and civic participation in the United States? Are you satisfied with the United States' broadband penetration rate? What steps should the FCC take to ensure that all Americans have access to this technology, including groups with lower rates of access, such as Native Americans or people with disabilities?
- Most consumers have a choice of only one or two broadband carriers in their local area. Is this sufficient competition and deployment? If yes, please explain why. If no, what should the FCC do to increase competition in broadband markets and to increase deployment?

LOCALISM:

- The FCC is statutorily mandated to enhance and promote localism. In an effort to achieve this goal, how would you evaluate past FCC efforts in areas such as low power radio or enhanced disclosure obligations for broadcasters, and what could the agency do better to ensure that communities are being served?

DIVERSITY:

- Does the FCC have a role in improving competition and the marketplace of ideas by maintaining structural limits on ownership structures of media companies? Studies on broadcast ownership show that only 3 percent of TV and 8 percent of radio stations have minority owners. How do you see the role of the FCC in correcting the disparity in media ownership by women and minorities?

OPEN NETWORKS:

- The Administration has said it supports the basic principle that "network providers should not be allowed to charge fees to privilege the content or applications of some web sites and Internet applications over others." Do you

agree? If so, how should this be enforced?

WIRELESS

- Right now wireless providers restrict consumers' ability to use the device of their choice with wireless service. Shouldn't wireless customers have the same rights as users of wired services have had since 1968? Do you believe that wireless providers are right in doing this?

We are looking forward to hearing the nominees address these question, and we hope this will assist your in evaluating their orientation towards the public interest. We look forward to the nominee's views on these issues, and we thank you for your help.