

MAY 14, 2003

**SCHAKOWSKY JOINS NEARLY 100 HOUSE DEMOCRATS IN SUPPORT OF FREE
AND OPEN MEDIA**

**OPPOSE BUSH ADMINISTRATION PLAN TO DESTROY ALREADY WEAKENED MEDIA
OWNERSHIP RULES**

WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), a member of the Energy and Commerce Committee, today said, "The Bush Administration and the FCC have tuned out public voices and tuned in Rupert Murdoch and all other media barons." □ □

Schakowsky joined nearly 100 of her House Democratic colleagues to release a letter to Michael Powell, Chair of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), in support of free and open media and against efforts by the Bush Administration to destroy already weakened media ownership rules. Powell has indicated his support for a proposal that would limit even further consumer choice by allowing a few media conglomerates to own more media outlets. □ A decision by the FCC is expected on June 2, 2003. □ Below is Schakowsky's statement from today's news conference:

"I am honored to join my colleagues to call on FCC Commissioner Powell and President Bush to listen to the American people, to support media diversity and localism, and to oppose even more media concentration. □

"The Bush Administration and the FCC have tuned out public voices and tuned in Rupert Murdoch and all other media barons. □ Unless you sit on top of a media empire, no one actually believes that concentrating more power in the hands of media moguls is in the best interest of the public.

"People in my district and around the country are demanding that FCC hear their voices. □ That is why last week the Chicago City Council unanimously approved a resolution urging the FCC to strengthen existing media ownership rules, not weaken them. □ □

"A free and open media is central to our democracy. □ It promotes civic discussion, encourages public participation in policy debates, and ensures representation of ideological, cultural and geographic diversity. □ I cannot overstate the importance of the FCC's review of media ownership rules in deciding whether the principles of the First Amendment will be embraced in every day reality, or only in theory. □ Clearly, this is the most important telecommunications issue of our time. □

"Over the last few years, we have seen considerable ownership consolidation in the media; while at the same time we have seen important public interest protections

eliminated, like the fairness doctrine. Unfortunately, the public is now faced with increased concentration - not increased competition - and no longer has the fairness doctrine to fall back on. The FCC should reinstate the fairness doctrine. At the very least, they should not allow even more ownership concentration that makes the loss of the fairness doctrine even more onerous.

"We must maintain media diversity and localism. We cannot allow information to be monopolized, rationed or censored because a free and open media is critical to the functions of a democratic society. The stakes are high and the threat to free speech is all too real."