

MASS MEDIA NOTES

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Rep. Schakowsky (Ill.), ranking Democrat on the House Commerce Consumer Protection Subcommittee, said on the House floor April 10 that the FCC should reinstate the fairness doctrine because the current media environment didn't offer adequate protections. The Commission eliminated the fairness doctrine in 1987, partly because it was assumed that other competitive stations would be able to cover issues ignored by some media. "Unfortunately, the public is now faced with increased concentration -- not increased competition -- and no longer has the fairness doctrine to fall back on," she said: "I believe that there is a significant argument for the FCC to recommend reinstatement of 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." Schakowsky also targeted Clear Channel as an example of overconcentration, saying the company had refused to carry an antiwar advertisement by herself and Rep. Davis (D-Ill.). "Fortunately, several independent stations did," Schakowsky said. Clear Channel also refused to carry songs by the Dixie Chicks (who have spoken out against the war), has put out a recommended "do not play" list and refuses to play ads that don't represent its view, she said. Andrew Levin, Clear Channel senior vp-govt. relations, said the company didn't have a policy of rejecting ads that had an antiwar sentiment and said if Schakowsky had difficulty getting an ad on the radio, it must have been for a reason other than its content. "Greater media ownership concentration will hurt our democracy," Schakowsky said, urging the FCC to slow down its ownership proceeding.