



December 1, 2005

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
403 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Inslee:

On behalf of the Campaign Legal Center, I am writing to inform you that on November 1, 2005 the Campaign Legal Center and the Media Access Project joined with the Milwaukee Public Interest Media Coalition and Chicago Media Action in filing petitions challenging the license renewals of television stations in Milwaukee and Chicago. The license challenges are based on 'market-wide failure' of local news stations in these markets to serve the public interest in their coverage of the 2004 election and to urge the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to deny the stations' license renewals.

The petitions cite a study by the Center for Media and Public Affairs (CMPA) which analyzed the five highest-rated local commercial broadcasters' coverage of the 2004 elections in the four weeks preceding the 2004 elections. The results of the study show local election coverage accounted for only 7.8 and 5.2 percent of total airtime devoted to news in Chicago and Milwaukee, respectively. In both media markets, the presidential race took the largest portion of election related news: 66 percent in Chicago and 74 percent in Milwaukee. In stark contrast, races for the U.S. House of Representatives accounted for just four percent of election related news in Chicago and a mere one percent in Milwaukee.

The dearth of local election coverage represents a market-wide failure of local television broadcasters in these two communities. The broadcasters in Chicago and Milwaukee failed to provide citizens with the information they needed about local races. Such information enables members of the public to become informed voters who are essential to a healthy, working democracy. The FCC should not just be a rubber stamp when it comes to license renewals. But, unfortunately, that is what has occurred in the past and should not happen once again.

It is time for the Commission to properly execute its regulatory responsibility of holding these broadcast license holders accountable for their demonstrable failures to fulfill statutory public interest obligations by refusing to renew their licenses.

Please let me know if you are interested in receiving further information about these license challenges, including copies of the declarations. We will gladly make them available to you.

Sincerely,

Meredith McGehee  
Media Policy Program Director

*Enclosure*