

# Senators maneuver against FCC ruling

Media ownership decision challenged

By David Ho, Associated Press, 7/30/2003

WASHINGTON - Senate critics of sweeping media ownership changes approved by the Federal Communication Commission said yesterday they have enough support to force a vote on rolling back the decision.

A resolution of disapproval for the rules changes, a seldom-used maneuver also called a "congressional veto," could go straight to the Senate floor for a vote by the first week of September, said Senator Byron Dorgan, Democrat of North Dakota, one of 20 senators sponsoring the measure.

The resolution is among several legislative challenges to an FCC overhaul that would allow individual companies to own television stations that reach nearly half the nation's viewers. Companies would also be allowed to own newspapers and broadcast stations in the same city.

To succeed, the resolution would need majority approval in the Senate and House and President Bush's signature or enough votes to override his veto.

Last week, the House voted 400-21 for a spending bill that included a provision that would prevent a single company from owning enough television stations to reach more than 35 percent of the nation's viewers.

The Republican-dominated FCC raised that cap to 45 percent and made other changes - including allowing a company to own a newspaper and broadcast outlets in the same market - on June 2 with a 3-2 party-line vote.

Many media companies said changes were needed because the old rules hindered their ability to grow and compete in a market altered by cable television, satellite broadcasting, and the Internet.

Critics warn that the FCC changes will lead to mergers that could put just a few companies in control of what most people see, hear, and read.

Senator Trent Lott said he supports deregulation in general, but media companies should be treated differently.

"There is strong feeling in the Congress and among the American people that [the FCC] did not handle these decisions correctly," said the Mississippi Republican. "I will do everything I could to override a veto in this area because I think it would be a mistake."

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