



Resolution

PROTECTING BROADCASTING FREEDOMS

- WHEREAS** National Religious Broadcasters, since the time of its founding, has devoted itself to protecting the three First Amendment freedoms of religious liberty, free speech, and freedom of the press, particularly as they relate to, and undergird, the mission of Christian broadcasters and communicators to freely and fully proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ both through traditional broadcast media and over newer technological platforms as well;
- WHEREAS** National Religious Broadcasters, to that end, successfully aided in the struggle in the 1980s to end the practical force and effect of the damaging regulation known as the “Fairness Doctrine,” a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) rule that hampered all three of the First Amendment freedoms which are at the core of NRB’s mission. Broadcasting freedoms, to be sustained, require vigilance on the part of NRB and its members, including the concerted effort of NRB to identify and oppose those legislative and regulatory proposals that threaten to erode First Amendment liberties, including those proposals that carry with them similar threats to broadcasting and communications freedom as were posed by the former Fairness Doctrine;
- WHEREAS** One proposal that poses such a threat is the plan of the FCC to conduct an investigation titled “Multi-Market Study of Critical Information Needs,” (the “CIN Study”) which appears to be designed to gather information on how all local news outlets – whether subject to FCC rules or not – select and prioritize news coverage, as well as data on “the process by which stories are selected, station priorities ... perceived station bias, perceived percent of news dedicated to each of the eight CINs, and perceived responsiveness to underserved populations;”
- WHEREAS** The CIN study has garnered strong objections from members of the House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce which has oversight jurisdiction over the FCC, and those objections were included in a letter dated December 10, 2013 to the Hon. Tom Wheeler, newly installed Chairman of the FCC. Sixteen objecting Committee members signed the letter, including Committee Chairman Rep. Fred Upton, Chairman of the Subcommittee on Communications and Technology Rep. Greg Walden, Chairman Emeritus Rep. Joe Barton, and Vice Chair Rep. Marsha Blackburn, stating that the FCC study “shows a startling disregard for not only the bedrock constitutional principles that prevent government intrusion into the press and other news media, but also for the lessons learned by the Commission’s experience with the Fairness Doctrine,” and described the CIN study as a virtual “Fairness Doctrine 2.0;”
- THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the National Religious Broadcasters urges the Federal Communications Commission to suspend its plans to pursue the “Multi-Market Study of Critical Information Needs” study (the “CIN Study”), thereby affirming that the FCC will jealously guard the First Amendment rights of all broadcasters and communicators and communications-related industries that are within its regulatory jurisdiction, and thereby also affirming that efforts to further evaluate the information needs of the American people will be performed consistently with the Commission’s statutory responsibilities.

Approved by the Board of Directors February 22, 2014