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CENTER FOR THE CREATIVE COMMUNITY

Press Release

Evidence Submitted to FCC Proves Freedom of Expression, Quality, Creativity in Television Harmed by Concentrated Corporate Ownership

Public Interest Requires Retaining Media Ownership Limits and Ending Network Monopolization of Television Program Production, Center for the Creative Community tells FCC

Washington, D.C., February 3, 2003. Compelling evidence documents unacceptable harm to freedom of expression, quality, and creativity in television, the Center for the Creative Community told the Federal Communications Commission today in comments filed in its biennial review of its media ownership rules.

“Based on this evidence – including evidence in the FCC’s own studies -- the public interest requires the Commission to not only retain its media ownership rules, but also end the networks’ monopolization of television program production,” says Jonathan Rintels, Executive Director of the Center for the Creative Community. “A growing chorus of Americans, from across the political spectrum, are calling on the FCC to restore competition and diversity of voices to television, before further harm is done to our nation’s democracy, culture, and economy.”

A small portion of the evidence submitted to the FCC: Five conglomerates (AOL Time Warner, Viacom, NBC, Disney, and News Corp./Fox) both produce and distribute the programming seen by the vast majority of Americans on broadcast and cable. Of the 40 new series airing on the four major broadcast networks in the 2002 season, 77.5 percent are owned in whole or part by those networks, up from 56.3 percent the prior season – an increase of over 37 percent in just one year.

In the FCC’s own research, executives of both independent companies and the networks themselves state that program quality, competition, and diversity of viewpoint have all been harmed as a result of the networks’ takeover of program production, resulting in “bland” and “homogenized” programming. As a result, some of America’s most talented creators are leaving

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television. The small businesses and creative entrepreneurs who drive originality and innovation in programming are being forced out of business. The broadcast networks' audience shares are down precipitously, as are foreign sales of American television programming.

Commentators with such diverse perspectives as William Safire, Peter Bart, Ted Turner, and others are expressing concern that corporate media ownership is harming American democracy and culture. Politicians from both parties are calling on the FCC to promote competition and diversity of voices in America's media, not reduce it.

While some network executives call this the “Golden Age of Television,” citing shows such as *Friends*, *ER*, *Law and Order*, *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit*, *Law and Order: Criminal Intent*, *NYPD Blue*, *The West Wing*, *Frasier*, and *The Practice*, not one of these quality programs is produced in-house by the network that airs it. All are produced by outside, independent producers. When these shows end their successful runs, the networks have produced little in-house to replace them, as evidenced by NBC's recent renewal of *Friends* for one more year at the cost of \$10 million per episode.

The CCC calls on the FCC to require that networks not exclude independently-produced programming from their primetime schedules. It proposes a new, flexible rule limiting the four largest networks – CBS, NBC, ABC, and Fox – to producing in-house or owning a financial interest in no more than 65 percent of the programming on their schedules. Smaller networks, such as UPN and WB, would be limited to 75 percent. New networks would have no limit. Similar percentages would apply to basic cable networks. Subscription cable networks would be excluded.

To further increase the number and breadth of independent voices on television, the CCC asks the FCC to monitor the success of small businesses, women, and minorities in placing shows on network schedules.

The Center for the Creative Community, Inc. is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization representing the tens of thousands of individual writers, directors, producers, performers, and other talented people who give life to America's popular and literary works of art and entertainment. Its mission is to serve both America's Creative Community and the general public by working to safeguard and enrich the vitality and diversity of our nation's culture.

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The CCC's Board of Advisors is made up of prominent members of the Creative Community and academia, including:

- Tony Adams, prolific producer, "Victor Victoria" (film and Broadway).
- Lionel Chetwynd, award-winning writer, director, producer.
- Blake Edwards, award-winning director, writer, producer, one of only three recipients of the prestigious Preston Sturges Award given jointly by the DGA and WGA, awarded the French Legion of Honor, winner of the French Cesar.
- Diane English, multiple Emmy-winning writer and producer, creator of "Murphy Brown."
- Marshall Goldberg, award winning writer, former Chairman of the Writer's Guild Industry-Health Fund and Producer - Writers Guild Pension Plan.
- Craig Haffner, President & CEO Greystone Television , Emmy Award winning Producer.
- Leonard Hill, prolific producer and leading member of the prestigious Caucus for Television Producers, Writers, and Directors.
- Charles Holland, writer-producer, "Soul Food," Vice-President of the Writers Guild of America, west.
- Gregory Allen Howard, screenwriter, "Remember the Titans," "Ali."
- Martin Kaplan, Associate Dean, USC Annenberg School For Communication and Director, The Norman Lear Center (as well as a screenwriter).
- Sandra Ortiz, Executive Director, Center For Communication Law and Policy, University of Southern California School of Law & Annenberg School of Communication.
- Dorothea G. Petrie, Emmy award-winning producer.
- Frank Pierson, Oscar-winning writer, director, President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (the "Oscars").
- Sarah Pillsbury, Oscar and Emmy-winning producer.
- David Rintels, multiple Emmy and Peabody-winning writer-producer.
- Victoria Riskin, President of the Writers Guild of America, west, and award winning writer-producer.
- James Sadwith, Emmy-award winning director, writer, producer.
- Sissy Spacek, Oscar-winning actress.

Further information regarding the Center for the Creative Community and the full text of its original and reply Comments to the FCC are available online at our website,

www.creativecommunity.us.

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