

New Economic Study Shows: Bigger Media Hurts Virginia

Virginia will suffer if the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) completely eliminates or even further relaxes key limits on media ownership, according to new research examining the impact of potential media mergers in **Northern Virginia/DC, Richmond, and Norfolk**, prepared by economic experts on behalf of Virginia members of the Media and Democracy Coalition.

Dwindling Newspapers, TV and Radio Stations

Since 1996 the FCC has quickly whittled away at what Virginia residents are able to read, hear and see. Further media consolidation will affect every resident of Virginia by reducing the number of media organizations that serve them. Diversity of ownership in media organizations equals diversity of viewpoints which ensures that Virginia receives robust debate on issues of community concern.

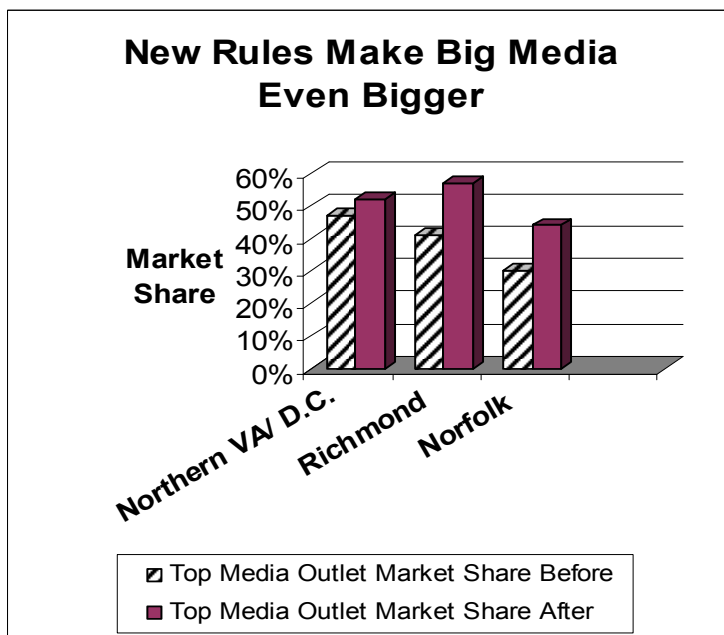
Diversity of Media Protects Democracy

Local radio, television and newspapers provide crucial information informing voters of an incumbent's track record or the background and platform of challenging candidates. The study reveals how Virginia's cities will lose choice and supply of critical local media if the FCC's proposed regulation takes effect, allowing the largest newspapers and largest TV stations to merge.

Key Findings: What Are The Impacts of Big Media Mergers In the Virginia Cities Studied?

Northern Virginia/D.C.: *Northern Virginia is one of Virginia's most diverse regions and the adjacent Washington, DC is the nation's capital. Because of the area's connection to national and local politics it is especially crucial that there is diverse media ownership to ensure a multitude of viewpoints and substantial coverage of a variety of issues. In the aftermath of proposed FCC rules Northern Virginia will end up with homogenous media that can't address the needs of this area's diverse population.*

- The *Washington Post* dominates the newspaper market. In TV, the major outlets are WRC, WTTG, WJLA, and WUSA.
- **Impact of Mergers:** If there are any cross media mergers in Northern Virginia/D.C. involving the top newspaper and TV outlets, a resulting increase in concentration would push media concentration in Northern Virginia/DC close to the monopoly limits in the DOJ/FTC Merger Guidelines, possibly creating media monopolies.



More...

This factsheet is by the Media and Democracy Coalition. www.media-democracy.net

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The MDC is a broad-based coalition of local and national media reform, civil rights, creative artist, consumer, justice and democracy organizations working to stop further media consolidation and to guarantee that Internet and broadband access are affordable, accessible, fast and available to all.



Richmond is Virginia's capital; it is especially critical that there is diversity of media outlets to ensure fair coverage and reporting of the government's activities. After consolidation Richmond media outlets would be vulnerable to control by politicians or their deep pocket supporters.

- The dominant newspaper is *The Times Dispatch*. In TV the dominant TV outlets are KTVR, WRIC and WWBT.
- **Impact of Mergers:** Because of the dominant position of the newspaper and three major television stations, any single merger violates the DOJ/FTC Merger Guidelines by a wide margin.

Norfolk: The effect of possible media mergers in this city reflects the media battle that lies ahead for most of the cities across Virginia. Norfolk is home to a large naval base; it also serves as a hub for southern coastal Virginia. Norfolk media provides important information on southern coastal Virginia for new residents of the local population, surrounding suburbs and outlying rural areas. After potential mergers are complete not only will Norfolk suffer but so will every resident in the surrounding area as well. The city's media offerings are already slim due to years of consolidation; further consolidation will essentially create a media monopoly.

- In the newspaper market, the major players are *The Virginian Pilot* and *Daily Press*. The major TV outlets are WTKR, WAVY, and WVEC.
- **Impact of Mergers:** Because of the dominant position of the newspapers and three dominant television stations, any single merger violates the DOJ/FTC Merger Guidelines by a wide margin.

Why This Matters:

How big the media gets matters to our democracy at all levels of government, including the local level. The Supreme Court has long held that "the widest possible dissemination of information from diverse and antagonistic sources is essential to the public welfare."

Broadcast licenses give their holders powerful public voices that are not available to every citizen. They pose a challenge in a society whose democracy relies on vigorous debate over public policy and social issues. The Courts have long accepted limitation on ownership of media outlets by those who hold broadcast licenses as "a reasonable means of promoting the public interest in diversified mass communications."

Further, localism is important because of our federal system of government that elects representatives on a local basis and places a great deal of emphasis on local policy for critically important issues – like public safety and education. Localism remains vital in media policy because citizens rely overwhelmingly on traditional outlets for information – local television stations and daily newspapers.

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