

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Representative Xavier Becerra (CA - 31) called on Federal Communications Commission Chairman Michael Powell to make sure that any new media ownership guidelines issued by the FCC promote greater minority media outlet ownership and programming diversity. He further urged the FCC to delay its June 2 plans to release new media ownership guidelines in order to allow for complete review and public comment.

At a news conference yesterday with the chairs of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, the Congressional Black Caucus and members of the Congressional Asian Pacific American Caucus, Rep. Becerra, who is the chair of the CHC's Telecommunications and Technology Task Force, released a letter sent to Chairman Powell. Below is an excerpt of that letter:

"Because Hispanics, African Americans and Asian Americans represent such a small percentage of the nation's broadcast owners, we are deeply troubled by the possible impact that further relaxation of these rules would have on minority media ownership and the diversity of programming. As the owners of the nation's airwaves, the American public and its representatives in Congress must have a meaningful opportunity to review the FCC's proposed rules before their final adoption."

At the news conference, Rep. Becerra pointed out further concerns regarding the FCC's proposed plans to create a "Diversity Index" that would judge whether cross-ownership sales should be allowed on a market-by-market basis. This "Index" would be based on a "Consumer Survey Media Usage" study commissioned by the FCC and conducted by Nielsen Media Research, where minority media outlets were not appropriately included in the questionnaire. "If the baseline information is wrong, how can the FCC extrapolate from there to make an informed decision?" Rep. Becerra asked.

He went on to point out systemic methodology flaws used by the prevalent media rating tracking companies. "The underestimation of Spanish television and radio

audiences discourages new advertisers from trying to reach an important segment of the population, and may contribute to the lack of Latinos on English language television," he said.

Rep. Becerra then reiterated the CHC's commitment to have the inaccuracies of existing measurement tools of Latino television audiences corrected. "So much is at stake - as the steward of our nation's public airwaves, the FCC needs to responsibly safeguard diversity and act in ways that allow for a full expression of views."