



Durbin, Duckworth urge DOJ and FCC to closely scrutinize proposed Sinclair-Tribune merger

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SPRINGFIELD – U.S. Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL) and Tammy Duckworth (D-IL) joined Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and seven other senators in urging the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) Antitrust Division and Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to closely scrutinize media mergers that fall within their jurisdictions, particularly, the proposed Sinclair Broadcasting-Tribune Media merger. A combined Sinclair-Tribune would own 233 television stations and reach 72 percent of American households, affecting tens of millions of consumers.

In a letter to Assistant Attorney General Makan Delrahim, Durbin, Duckworth, and the group of other senators call on the DOJ to conduct a thorough investigation of the proposed Sinclair-Tribune transaction and any subsequent media mergers and to take whatever enforcement action is warranted under applicable antitrust law. In a letter to Chairman Ajit Pai, the senators urge the FCC to redouble its efforts to investigate proposed media transactions and take action where competition or consumers would be harmed.

“In light of recent actions by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to weaken media ownership limitations, we write to urge the Department of Justice (DOJ) to closely scrutinize media mergers that fall within its jurisdiction, particularly Sinclair Broadcasting’s proposed acquisition of Tribune Media,” the senators wrote to Assistant Attorney General Delrahim. “The relaxation of media regulations under Chairman Pai’s leadership, in addition to disturbing allegations concerning his individual conduct relating to the Sinclair/Tribune transaction, have undermined our confidence that the FCC will conduct an impartial investigation into this proposed merger. To the extent that the FCC is currently incapable or unwilling to conduct an impartial review of the proposed Sinclair/Tribune merger, untainted by political considerations, we are relying on the DOJ to do so.”

The senators also wrote to FCC Chairman Pai, “Deregulation in the media industry has heightened the need for thorough and impartial reviews of individual transactions. We urge the FCC to redouble its efforts to investigate proposed media transactions and take action where competition or consumers would be harmed.”

In addition to Durbin, Duckworth, and Klobuchar, the letters were also signed by Senators Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Tom Udall (D-NM), Gary Peters (D-MI), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Brian Schatz (D-HI), and Edward J. Markey (D-MA).

In November, Durbin and Duckworth joined 12 of their Senate colleagues to request the inspector general of the FCC open an [investigation](#) into the objectivity and impartiality of the FCC’s review of the proposed merger of Sinclair Broadcasting and Tribune Media. In their letter to the inspector general, the senators point out 16 actions and events that suggest a disturbing pattern of a three way quid-pro-quo involving Sinclair, the Trump Administration, and Chairman Ajit Pai.

The full text of the senators’ letter to DOJ is available [here](#) and FCC is available [here](#).