

## PERSONAL EXPLANATION

**HON. MIKE McINTYRE**

OF NORTH CAROLINA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 11, 2003*

Mr. McINTYRE. Mr. Speaker, on Thursday, February 27, 2003, my father underwent surgery and thus I was unavoidably absent for rollcall vote 39. Had I been present I would have voted 'yea' on rollcall vote 39.

AN OPEN LETTER TO FCC CHAIRMAN MICHAEL POWELL REGARDING THE CONSOLIDATION OF OWNERSHIP OF AMERICAN MEDIA

**HON. BERNARD SANDERS**

OF VERMONT

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 11, 2003*

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, I am enclosing a letter that I recently wrote to Michael Powell, Chairman of the FCC, regarding the growing consolidation of media ownership in America. This letter is especially relevant today as the FCC is now in the process of eliminating the few remaining regulations which would stop further consolidation of the industry.

FEBRUARY 27, 2003

DEAR CHAIRMAN POWELL, let's be clear. One of the great crises facing this country is that a handful of huge corporations control the flow of information. Whether it is television, radio, newspapers, magazines, books or the Internet, fewer and fewer giant conglomerates are determining what we see, hear and read. Unless we stop this trend and create a media with much broader ownership and diversity of opinion, it is not certain that democracy will survive in this country. This is a major, major concern that must be dealt with immediately. I fear very much that if we continue down the path we're on, we will end up like the former Soviet Union—a nation where there were many different news outlets, but all were controlled by the same entity. The difference is that in this country it will be multi-national corporations who control the media, and not the government.

Let me express my outrage that the FCC has chosen to have only one public hearing on what is one of the most important issues facing Americans today. Before any decisions are made regarding deregulation and increased corporate control over the media, the FCC must hear from the American people. In my view, the FCC should hold at least twenty meetings across the country to hear directly what ordinary the people have to say. Having held two town meetings in the state of Vermont on the issue of media consolidation, I can tell you first hand that the people of this country want to be heard on this issue. In Vermont, at the two public meetings that we held, over 600 people came out. I guarantee that you will have huge audiences all over the country and, let me take this opportunity to invite you to Vermont. Please do not make a decision without input from the people. Given what goes on in Washington it may be hard to believe, but there are opinions in this country which do not necessarily agree with Rupert Murdoch, General Electric, the Disney Corporation, and other large campaign contributors.

Why do we want more de-regulation and more concentration of ownership in the media. We should be moving in the other direction—less concentration, more diverse ownership and more points of view. Television is the means by which most Americans get their "news." Without exception, every major network is owned by a huge conglomerate that has enormous conflicts of interest. Fox News Channel is owned by Rupert Murdoch, a right-wing billionaire who already owns a significant portion of the world's media. His network has close ties to the Republican Party, and among his "fair and balanced" commentators is Newt Gingrich.

NBC is owned by General Electric, one of the largest corporations in the world and a company with enormous conflicts of interest. GE has a long history of anti-union activity. It has substantial interests in weapons manufacturing, finance, nuclear power and many other industries. It has vital concerns about our trade policy as they have been one of the leaders in shutting down American plants and moving them to low-wage countries like China and Mexico. GE is also an important contributor to the Republican Party.

ABC is owned by the Disney Corp., which produces toys and products in developing countries where they provide their workers atrocious wages and working conditions. CBS is owned by Viacom, another huge media conglomerate that owns, among other entities, MTV, Showtime, Nickelodeon, VHI, TNN, CMT, 39 broadcast television stations, 184 radio stations, Paramount Pictures and Blockbuster Inc.

The essential problem with television is not just a right-wing corporate bias in news and programming, or the transformation of politics and government into entertainment and sensationalism. Nor is it just the constant bombardment of advertising, much of it directed at children. It's that the most important issues facing the middle-class and working people of our country are rarely discussed. The average American watches dozens of hours a week of television, but to a very significant degree does not see his or her reality reflected on the screen.

In my strong opinion what the people of this country see, hear and read should not be controlled by a handful of multi-national conglomerates. More concentration of ownership in the media industry would be a disaster for this country. Stop the deregulation, and begin hearings on how we can have more diverse ownership and more divergent viewpoints on the public airwaves. Democracy is too precious to be given over to corporations interested only in growing bigger and more profitable. The airwaves and cable-ways belong to the people, and the interests of the people should be served.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

BERNARD SANDERS,  
*U.S. Congressman.*

INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT FOR  
H.R. 1212 VETERANS' EDUCATION  
AFFORDABILITY ACT

**HON. CHRISTOPHER H. SMITH**

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, March 11, 2003*

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, Mr. EVANS, Mr. BROWN of South Carolina, Mr.

RODRIGUEZ, and Mr. MICHAUD join me in introducing H.R. 1212, the Veterans' Education Affordability Act, to increase the Montgomery GI Bill (MGIB) monthly educational assistance allowance to \$1,200 for full-time students and repeal the \$1,200 pay reduction for MGIB eligibility.

The original World War II GI Bill exceeded all expectations and had enormous benefits beyond the immediate ones given to deserving war veterans. College enrollment grew dramatically: in 1947, GI Bill enrollees accounted for almost half of the total college population. This resulted in a need for more and larger colleges and universities. In my home state of New Jersey, Rutgers University saw its admissions grow from a pre-war high of 7,000 to almost 16,000.

In the decade following World War II, more than 2 million eligible men and women went to college using GI Bill educational benefits. The result was an American workforce enriched by 450,000 engineers, 238,000 teachers, 91,000 scientists, 67,000 doctors, 22,000 dentists and another million college-educated men and women.

Building upon the success of the original GI Bill, Congress subsequently approved a second bill following the Korean Conflict; then a third bill following the Vietnam Conflict; and a fourth bill for the post-Vietnam War era. In 1985, under the dedicated leadership of former Veterans' Committee Chairman Sonny Montgomery, Congress approved the modern version of the GI Bill which is fittingly called the Montgomery GI Bill. The MGIB was designed not only to help veterans make a transition into the workforce through additional education and training, but also to serve as a powerful recruitment tool for our all-volunteer armed forces.

With the enactment of Public Law 107-103, the Veterans Education and Benefits Expansion Act of 2001, Congress significantly increased MGIB purchasing power for veterans and servicemembers. I was privileged to author this legislation which increased the MGIB basic benefit in January 2002 from \$672 to \$800 per month. It further increased the benefit in October 2002 to \$900 and will increase the benefit in October of this year to \$985—a 46 percent increase from the \$672 per month.

But according to data furnished by the College Board, for the current academic year the MGIB benefit remains below the level needed for a veteran-student to attend a public, four-year institution as a commuter student. This increase to \$1,200 would be another significant step toward a more realistic educational benefit.

This legislation would also eliminate the \$1,200 reduction in pay required for a servicemember to gain eligibility for the MGIB. We view the \$1,200 as an unnecessary GI education tax and a hardship on the most junior servicemembers, many of whom qualify for food stamps. No other federal education program charges such a participation fee and H.R. 1212 will repeal it.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this legislation to help both servicemembers and veterans get the most valuable benefit possible—a quality education and training for the workplace.