

January 18, 2011

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Hate Speech and Violence-Inducing Rhetoric in Media

Chairman Genachowski:

For over a week the country has grieved for the victims of the horrendous shooting rampage that took place in Tucson, Arizona. In the wake of this incident, many public officials and media outlets have asked the question – has violent rhetoric played a role in inciting extremist activities in this country? We are saddened that it takes a tragedy of this nature for the media and the public to begin a dialogue about extremist rhetoric and activities.

As you will recall, this is a question that we asked the FCC to examine – two years ago. We write today to ask you to act immediately to help the country, including law enforcement officers, public officials, individuals and the media itself – to understand the impact of hate speech and extreme rhetoric that advocates or legitimizes violence.

Please note that we are not saying that hate speech led to the Tucson shooting – as of now the shooter's motivations are a mystery, and we understand that many factors could have contributed to the violent act. Nor do we wish for this to turn into a polarized debate. This is a bipartisan issue; both sides of the aisle must be concerned with toning down the violent rhetoric that has become all too common over mainstream media. This is an occasion for us to reaffirm that political differences not degenerate into demonization and calls for violence.

Thus, we, the undersigned, renew our plea for the Commission to promptly grant the National Hispanic Media Coalition's (NHMC) request that the Commission initiate an inquiry into the extent, nature and effects of hate speech, and possible non-regulatory ways to counteract or reduce its negative impacts.

By opening a docket for comment on the petition, the Commission will collect data and information about hate speech, raise public awareness of the issue, and allow individuals to comment on the hate speech happening in their communities in an accessible and transparent forum. This will help inform the public dialogue that has already unfolded.

Respectfully submitted,

National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC)
Media Alliance
Benton Foundation
Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU)
National Puerto Rican Coalition (NPRC)
SER – Jobs for Progress, National, Inc.
Center for New Community
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
Center for Media Justice
Media Literacy Project
Free Press
Reclaim the Media
Industry Ears
National Association of Hispanic Publications (NAHP)
Media Working Group, Inc.
Presente.org
National Association of Latino Independent Producers (NALIP)
National Hispana Leadership Institute (NHLI)
Main Street Project
SueWilsonReports.com
Media and Democracy Coalition
Web Wise Kids
Sarasota Alliance for Fair Elections
Unitarian Universalist Legislative Ministry of Florida
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts (NHFA)
Media Access Project
Prometheus Radio Project
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI)
United Church of Christ, Office of Communication, Inc.

cc: Commissioner Michael Copps, Commissioner Robert McDowell; Commissioner Mignon Clyburn; Commission Meredith Atwell-Baker