

**Writers Guild of America, East**

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The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

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Dear Mr. President:

The Writers Guild of America, East thanks you for your ongoing commitment to a regulatory environment that fosters independent media so that content creators and the public can explore the crucial issues of our time in a thoughtful and thorough manner. When nominating replacements for Federal Communications Commission Chairman Julius Genachowski and Commissioner Robert McDowell you have the opportunity to shape the future of communications policy for generations to come. We urge you to nominate Commissioners who are committed to the robust, open communication of ideas and programs over the airwaves and wires that connect Americans. The challenges are very different from those that existed in the early days of telecommunications, radio and television, and the Commission has a unique opportunity to encourage competition and openness in electronic media; that is the only way to ensure that the American people will have access to the greatest possible number of creative voices, diverse opinions, thoughtful analyses, and compelling stories.

The WGAE represents thousands of members who write for film, television, radio and digital media, as well as many who edit copy or create graphics for news and public affairs programs. Our members work for the major movie studios, commercial and public television and radio networks, as well as local stations. Their material is seen in theaters, broadcast over the airwaves, distributed via cable and satellite television and posted on the Internet.

Our members understand that in decades past, Americans consumed programs distributed over the airwaves on a prescribed frequency band, but that in today's world, content is distributed mostly via digitized signals carried on cables and via Wi-Fi signals. We who create content for a living know that storytelling is increasingly platform-neutral; that is, people watch and listen on their smartphones and tablets, on television and computer screens connected to wires that carry both TV and Internet signals. To uphold and advance the public interest, the FCC must recognize that this is the reality of how the media now function.

The WGAE strongly opposes the theft of copyrighted material via the Internet. Some people call this "piracy," perhaps to evoke a romantic,

swashbuckling image. But every time a television show, movie, or other copyrighted program is ripped off and distributed unlawfully, the writers of the material (like its other creators) lose important residual compensation that they rely on to support themselves and their families.

At the same time, the WGAE firmly supports the bedrock principle of net neutrality, and we hope the new FCC nominees will commit themselves to expanding Chairman Genachowski's preliminary efforts to ensure that access to the Internet be robust and open. The Internet and other digital distribution systems provide unprecedented opportunities for writers and other content creators to present their material directly to consumers. Permitting broadband providers to discriminate amongst content to decide which programs get priority would transform the open architecture of the Internet into a slightly upgraded version of today's television and film industry.

Continued consolidation of media ownership also threatens to narrow the national dialogue. With less and less competition, movie studios and television producers take fewer creative risks, and the audience suffers. Fewer news organizations hire fewer journalists, and the public learns less about the critical issues of our times. Increased consolidation of media outlets continues to undermine localism and reduces the diversity of voices presenting news and public affairs programming. Combined with downward economic pressures, consolidation reduces the resources made available to do the investigating, writing, shooting, editing and producing necessary to provide useful, informative, reliable news and public-affairs programming for the American public. And the potential for the anti-competitive handling of content is particularly acute when vertically integrated providers of content, applications and services gain significant market share, as was the case with the merger of Comcast with NBCUniversal. We hope the FCC commits itself to reversing these alarming trends.

We are gratified by your unwavering support for the principle of net neutrality your skepticism about continued consolidation of ownership of the entities that create and distribute media. We urge you to appoint Commissioners who share your commitment.

Most respectfully,



Michael Winship  
President



Lowell Peterson  
Executive Director

Cc: Senator Charles Schumer  
Senator Kirsten Gillibrand