

HAWAII

# The FCC Decision That Could

and Should — Shake Up

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## Hawaii Media

The Federal Communications Commission must guarantee diversity in television news media and coverage.

APRIL 20, 2014 • By Adrienne Brantley  

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On March 31, 2014, the Federal Communications Commission voted 3-2 to approve the proposed ban on Joint Sales Agreements, known as JSAs, and voted 5-0 to approve the proposed ban on coordinated retransmission consent negotiations between two of a market's four highest-rated stations.

The restriction on the coordinated retransmission consent negotiations was founded on the FCC's sense that such negotiations gave the stations too much power when consulting with cable systems and other multichannel video providers.

In other words, TV stations could get more money from cable systems with coordinated negotiations than if they discussed business dealing independently.

These types of dealings are harmful to both the market and the consumer and give TV stations the advantage.

Restricting coordinated negotiations is key to protecting consumers who are often unaware that unfair business practices are taking place.

Joint Service Agreements existed in about 94 local television markets across the

country which is almost half of the 210 local TV markets nationwide.

In Hawaii, KHNL, KFVE and KGMB have a Shared Service Agreement.

Similar to consumer's discontent with JSAs, the SSA between KHNL, KFVE and KGMB has been met with criticism.

The plan circumvents FCC rules that prevent one company owning two of the four highest-rated stations in a single market.

The trend has been taking us toward fewer owners with more and more power over what we get as news.

The decision by the FCC signals that companies cannot exploit rules at the expense of consumers and is a step in the right direction.

JSAs circumvent longstanding FCC rules against monopolizing public airwaves.

By eliminating JSAs more competition and diversity will take place within the cable television markets.

Competition forces businesses to become innovative and price their product reasonably.

In turn, consumers receive a better product for a lower price.

The FCC must continue to make decisions that are in the best interest of the consumer. One such decision that would directly impact Hawaii is regulating Shared Service Agreements.

We should not be denied variety when it comes to local televised news.

Unfortunately, there is still much work to be done in not only improving media and transparency but also ensuring such rules remain in place.

Policies designed to determine if there are too many interlocking ties between stations

that are supposed to be competitors in the market had previously existed in the 1960s and 1970s but were repealed by the FCC in 1988.

Now 26 years later the FCC is back to examining relationships between stations to determine if they should be permitted or forbidden.

Organizations such as Media Council Hawaii have helped this process.

Media Council Hawaii seeks to improve public access to information, strengthen public support for First Amendment rights and freedoms, broaden public understanding of the role of the media, and promote accurate and fair journalism in Hawaii.

As consumers impacted by such policies we must continue to advocate for more transparency within the media and hold policy makers responsible for their decisions.

**About the author:** *Adrienne Brantley is an MA Diplomacy and Military Studies candidate at Hawaii Pacific University. She is currently an intern with Common Cause Hawaii and in the past has worked for Senator Harry Reid and the Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies.*

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