

April 19 2005 - House Members Announce Formation of

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the Future of American Media Caucus

Aim To Inform Colleagues on Wide Array of Media Policy Issues Currently Being Debated In Congress

Washington, DC - With Congress and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) currently debating how to overhaul the nation's media policies, six Members of the U.S. House of Representatives today announced the formation of the Future of American Media (FAM) Caucus. Chaired by Rep. Maurice Hinchey (D-NY) along with co-chairs Rep. Louise Slaughter (D-NY), Rep. Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Rep. David Price (D-NC), Rep. Jay Inslee (D-WA), and Rep. Sherrod Brown (D-OH), the FAM Caucus will provide a venue where reasoned debate, expert analysis, and diverse points of view can come together to address critical media policy issues.

"I've been on the front line of these media issues for the last 15 years. Ever since the Reagan administration trashed the Fairness Doctrine in 1987, the accuracy, fairness, and balance of broadcast content has been in steep decline," said Rep. Slaughter who also serves as Ranking Member of the House Rules Committee. She continued, "The American public owns the airwaves. This new Caucus will continually remind the public, the press, the Congress, and the broadcasters of that simple undeniable fact until we get the kind of media that a great democracy needs and deserves."

The FAM Caucus is composed of House Members who believe in an accountable, diverse, fair, and independent media. The Caucus is open to Members of both parties and it neither supports nor opposes any particular industry stakeholder. Currently, the FAM Caucus consists of 12 House Members. The FAM Caucus' goal is to educate Members and staff about media issues before Congress and to ensure that all parties - especially the American public - have a chance to participate in the vital debate over media policy.

"In order to have a well-informed society, it is imperative that the public has access to diverse sources of information. The same holds true for Congress, which is why we formed the Future of American Media Caucus," Rep. Hinchey said. "As

Congress looks to rewrite the laws that will shape media in America for the next two decades, the Future of American Media Caucus will be there every step of the way to educate Members of Congress and their staff about these issues and how they will impact our constituents. There is no issue more central to the future of a functioning democracy than how Americans receive information. This new Caucus will make sure media policy issues are front and center in the minds of Members."

"The damaging effects of media consolidation have been felt throughout the nation as consumers are faced with fewer programming choices and a rapidly dwindling supply of independent news and information sources," Sanders said. "The formation of the Future of American Media Caucus is an important step in the fight to maintain local perspectives and diversity of opinion in the media."

Rep. Price added, "A small handful a media conglomerates have come to control the majority of our media outlets, threatening the fundamental values of decency, localism, competition and diversity that are essential to our democracy. Americans have told us in overwhelming numbers that they want their local media back. This caucus will be an important part of that fight."

Rep. Inslee said, "Media diversity is a vital part of a free democratic society. Citizens need access to a variety of voices and opinions to make informed decisions as voters and as consumers. The Future of American Media Caucus will work to ensure that Americans enjoy access to varied and numerous media sources, and will promote diversity in public discourse."

Rep. Brown noted, "The FAM Caucus will help Congress monitor media outlets as technology advances and the way news and information is distributed evolves. Competition is critical to ensuring diversity and accountability in news reporting."

Rep. Diane Watson (D-CA), a FAM Caucus member, added, "The future of media as we know it is at a crossroad. I hope the formation of the Future of American Media Caucus will help inform and educate my colleagues on a host of issues confronting the media, especially as consumers increasingly turn away from traditional media sources in search of new outlets such as satellite radio and the internet. How our government chooses to oversee and regulate these emerging media will have a profound impact on our society as well as our democratic institutions."

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), a member of the FAM Caucus, said, "A free and open media is central to our democracy. It promotes civic discussion, encourages public participation in policy debates, and ensures representation of ideological, cultural and geographic diversity. Unfortunately, over the last few years, we have seen considerable ownership consolidation in the media; while at the same time we have seen important public interest protections eliminated. The Future of American Media Caucus will work toward restoring independent, local outlets, diversity in views and ownership, and increased competition on the airwaves."

Beginning in May, the FAM Caucus will host the first in what will be a series of briefings on contemporary media issues.

- On Thursday, May 12 at 2pm, the Caucus will host a briefing on the Future of American Media and the role of Congress.

- On Tuesday, May 24 at 4pm the Caucus will host an event featuring one of the most recognized and respected journalists in America, Bill Moyers, who will offer his views on the state of the media industry.

Members of the media who are interested in receiving updates on FAM Caucus-related activities are encouraged to call

Eric Burns in Slaughter's office at 202-225-8415 or e-mail him at eric.burns@mail.house.gov.