

KEVIN CRAMER
NORTH DAKOTA

WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE:
1032 LONGWORTH BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
202-225-2611

BISMARCK OFFICE:
220 EAST ROSSER AVENUE
SUITE 328
BISMARCK, NORTH DAKOTA 58501
701-224-0355



CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

FARGO OFFICE:
3217 FIECHTNER DRIVE, SUITE D
FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA 58103
701-356-2216

MINOT OFFICE:
315 MAIN STREET SOUTH, SUITE 203
MINOT, NORTH DAKOTA 58701
701-839-0255

GRAND FORKS OFFICE:
CENTER FOR INNOVATION FOUNDATION BUILDING
4200 JAMES RAY DRIVE, OFFICE 600
GRAND FORKS, NORTH DAKOTA 58202
701-738-4880

November 4, 2016

Ben Sherwood
Disney Media Networks, Co-Chairman
Disney | ABC Television Group, President
500 South Buena Vista Street
Burbank, California 91521

Stephen B. Burke
NBCUniversal, President & CEO
Comcast Building 30
Rockefeller Plaza
New York, NY 10112

Leslie Moonves
CBS Corporation, Chairman, President, & CEO
CBS Headquarters
51 W. 52nd Street
New York, NY 10019

Dana Walden
FOX Television Stations Group, Chairman & CEO
FOX Television Stations Group
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

Dear Mr. Sherwood, Mr. Burke, Mr. Moonves, and Ms. Walden:

As a member of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce with subcommittee assignments to Communications and Technology and Oversight and Investigations, I am writing to inform you that I intend to request a hearing to explore network media bias in coverage of the 2016 presidential campaign. A recent Gallup poll indicates that Americans' trust and confidence in the mass media – to report the news fully, accurately and fairly – has dropped to 32 percent, its lowest level in polling history. Last week, a poll released by the Associated Press also found that 56 percent of likely voters think the media is biased against Republican nominee Donald Trump while just 37 percent say the coverage of the race is mostly balanced. Furthermore, a Harvard University study this summer reported that Donald Trump coverage went from 57 percent positive and 43 percent negative during the early Republican primaries to 61 percent negative and 39 percent positive after Trump defeated his last Republican rivals. With the most recent RealClearPolitics poll average showing Hillary Clinton at 45.3 points to Donald Trump at 42.7 points, your broadcast news networks – who utilize federal spectrum to conduct their operations – have a moral obligation to provide balanced, unbiased news coverage for the American people.

To be clear, I do not support a return to the Fairness Doctrine. However, while the principle of an independent media is critical to our constitutional government, a news media free of political bias is required for a free system to flourish. Our national broadcast networks have a unique relationship with the American people, one that should not be taken lightly, and has been supported by our federal government from the very beginning. Still today, broadcast networks enjoy the use of federally-allocated spectrum to increase their access to the American people. For this reason, I am alarmed by recent polls and studies, which seem to confirm that our national network news has devolved from fact-based journalism to surreptitious propaganda.

As you are well aware, the privilege to broadcast a free signal is a privilege afforded to very few, and with it comes tremendous responsibility. The broadcast license awarded to you by the Federal Communications Commission is on behalf of the citizens. The spectrum your news is carried on is not yours alone but rather the property of a skeptical citizenry. Your FCC license and the liberty that comes with your First Amendment rights are not a license to broadcast anything you want or in any way you choose. Rather, this special freedom comes with basic moral and legal parameters.

Sincerely,

Kevin Cramer
Member of Congress