

Alliance for Community Media Hill Day
Remarks of FCC Commissioner Gomez
April 14, 2026

Good morning, everyone. Thank you to the Alliance for Community Media for inviting me to speak to you ahead of your Hill Day. As I look around this room, I am reminded of the incredible responsibility—and privilege—we share. Each of us is entrusted with a mission that goes far beyond the technicalities of broadcasting or the logistics of running media channels. We are here because we care deeply about the voices and stories of our communities. We are here because we know that access to meaningful information is essential for every American—not just as a matter of convenience, but as a cornerstone of our democracy.

Days such as today serve as powerful reminders of why our work matters. When we gather as advocates, professionals, and citizens, we reaffirm our commitment to making sure that no voice is overlooked, that every story has a place, and that information crucial to everyday life is accessible to everyone. In a time when national news can feel overwhelming and distant, it is local media that brings us together, reflecting the issues, the triumphs, and the challenges closest to home.

The Alliance for Community Media has a long and distinguished history—one defined by service, advocacy, and impact. Representing more than 1,700 Public, Educational, and Government organizations across the country, the Alliance provides the backbone to local media efforts. These organizations serve as lifelines for information, culture, and civic engagement. They are the trusted outlets through which schools share updates, religious institutions reach out to congregations, colleges highlight achievements, and government officials communicate vital policies. And beyond these formal roles, community media offers a stage for countless community groups—from youth organizations to senior centers—to connect, to inform, and to inspire.

What you do together is not merely about broadcasting content. Your work is fundamentally about building bridges—between neighbors, across generations, and among citizens and the institutions that serve them. These bridges form the infrastructure of a healthy society, constructed not with bricks and mortar, but with stories, conversations, and connections.

Our towns and cities are enriched by the stories you share. Whether it's a high school sports game, a city council debate, a faith-based event, or a new art exhibit, community media captures experiences that shape our lives. This programming informs, empowers, educates, and strengthens our democracy by keeping residents connected and informed about local issues that matter.

And this brings us directly to the First Amendment—the very foundation on which community media stands. Truly local broadcasters ensure that everyday Americans have a platform to share their voices and perspectives. They illuminate the diversity of viewpoints that make our nation vibrant, especially at a time when national narratives can overshadow local realities.

But today, that First Amendment foundation is trembling. Across the country, we have witnessed an unprecedented series of attacks—coordinated efforts by the federal government to censor, control, and silence those who dissent. Last year, I launched a First Amendment tour to

fight back against this campaign of censorship and control. On that tour, which is ongoing, I have heard from Americans who do not typically engage with the FCC, yet feel the consequences of these threats to free expression every day.

Those threats are not hypothetical—they are ongoing and they are escalating. Most disturbingly, the power to revoke a broadcast license—meant to ensure service to communities—is being weaponized to threaten stations that air news the Administration dislikes. That is not regulation. That is punitive censorship. When licenses become tools of coercion, the very concept of a free press is washed away.

We have seen frivolous news distortion complaints used to pressure newsrooms. We have seen the power to derail mergers wielded to reshape editorial independence. The clearest example is the Paramount-Skydance merger, approved only after companies agreed to unprecedented concessions—concessions that subjected newsrooms to government-approved editorial oversight. That goes directly against the First Amendment. I dissented. And I will continue to speak out whenever government coercion threatens free expression.

Paramount's capitulation—to avoid conflict with the Administration, to trade independence for a payout—comes at the expense of the American public. The company agreed to government influence over newsroom decisions and accepted a so-called “truth monitor” at CBS to ensure journalists do not criticize the Administration. This is a direct violation of both the First Amendment and long-standing legal precedent.

But the Commission is not stopping there. It is now taking actions to change the rules of the game entirely. The FCC used a bureau-level waiver to override Congressionally established ownership caps that protect localism, competition, and viewpoint diversity. There is a court fight going on as we speak about the lawfulness of these actions, but what is clear is that elimination of these caps would allow massive consolidation—reducing the number of voices in our media ecosystem, shuttering local newsrooms, and weakening communities in the process. Each newly consolidated newsroom represents a narrowing of public discourse.

Notably, while outlets deemed critical of this Administration are threatened with investigations, defunding, or license revocation, others that are viewed favorably by this Administration—are being quietly fast-tracked through regulatory processes, through a shortcut I call the Billionaire Buddy Bypass. This is not about reducing bias or strengthening journalism. It is about engineering an echo chamber. It is viewpoint control, plain and simple.

But we are not powerless. Community media stands on the front lines of this fight. You have always championed localism and diversity of thought. You have always served your communities—not the government, not political interests, not corporate conglomerates. And your work is essential now more than ever.

When community media thrives, our democracy thrives. When people have access to trusted local information—about schools, faith communities, civic events, and public safety—they become engaged participants in their own governance. When they have a platform to share their voices, they become stewards of their own future.

You are the architects of opportunity, creating the spaces where new ideas flourish and where all residents can be heard. But make no mistake: your ability to continue this work depends on the survival of a truly free press, protected from government coercion and political

interference. That is why it is essential that you speak up, push back, and advocate fiercely—not only for your own organizations, but for the constitutional principles that enable your work. Because if the First Amendment is to mean anything at all, it must mean that no government—regardless of party—gets to decide what is true, who gets heard, or which voices are silenced.

Thank you for your commitment, your courage, and your unwavering belief in the power of community and free expression. The road ahead will not be easy. But together—steadfast, determined, and united—we can defend the First Amendment and preserve a media landscape that serves all Americans.

Thank you.