

And behind those initial programs and those initiatives by President Ronald Reagan and later President George Herbert Walker Bush and then George W. Bush and the initiatives that we've undertaken with our armed services to bring freedom to others in the world and to protect our own security are those wonderful, great staff people who not only work on the Armed Services Committee, but also work in the Members' offices. And Vicki Middleton is first and foremost, in my mind, among those people.

She is, in my estimation—and I know a few Members will argue with me because they have superb people working for them—I have always called her the best chief of staff on Capitol Hill.

And so, Mr. Speaker, as I leave this job after 28 years, I thought it might be nice to give something to Vicki Middleton to make sure that she understands how much we value her great leadership and her friendship. And so my wife Lynn and I had this painting, which is a signed and numbered lithograph by Olaf Wieghorst, whom you may have heard me talk about on a couple of occasions here on the House floor, who is considered the "Dean of Western artists" from my hometown of San Diego, whose paintings, at the end of his life, he was the highest price western painter in the world. And he was a guy who was highly independent, strongly accountable, looked you right in the eye, never had a lick of painting lessons in his life, but had a great eye for movement, for color, and for the people of the West. And he painted this beautiful picture of western horses. And this inscription reads, "From Lynn and Duncan Hunter, for your 26 years of service to America, to Vicki Middleton, and for a lifetime of friendship, duty, honor and country."

I reflected today, Mr. Chairman, as I looked at all of our great staff members, that those terms, "duty, honor and country," aren't reserved exclusively for the people who wear the uniform of the United States—although they certainly reflect those values of our uniformed personnel—but they also reflect the values of people like Vicki Middleton, who came from a small town in Virginia, came to Washington, D.C. with independence, with honesty, with integrity, and with a great deal of patriotism for her country, and dedicated 26 years to this institution and to the flag that waves over it.

So, Mr. Speaker, Lynn and I are presenting this picture—in fact, we've already presented it to Vicki once; I think we're going to present it to her about five more times before this session is over—but we're presenting this picture to her in recognition of her service to America.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. BURTON of Indiana addressed the House. His remarks will appear

hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

OPPOSING FCC MEDIA OWNERSHIP RULES

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATERS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, Congressman JAY INSLEE, for his work on opposing the FCC's media ownership rules and for arranging time to bring this issue to the House floor this evening.

I was proud to cosponsor his resolution, H.J. Res. 79, a resolution to disapprove of the Federal Communications Commission's media ownership rules.

The FCC has neglected to deal with the crisis in minority ownership. Only 44 of the more than 1,200 TV stations are owned by people of color. The situation is particularly dire for the African American community. The number of African American owners has dropped 60 percent from 2006 to 2007. There are only eight TV stations in this country owned by African Americans.

Unfortunately, the FCC's vote last December to lift the newspaper broadcast cross-ownership rules would take direct aim at minority broadcast owners. According to the FCC, the new rule allows a newspaper to buy a television station in our Nation's largest markets if the outlet is ranked outside the top four.

There are at least two problems with the rule: One, it is not what it appears to be. The new rule contains loopholes that will allow for greater consolidation in potentially every market in this country. Second, nearly half of all minority-owned stations operate in the top 20 markets and all are ranked outside the top four. This would make them a target for acquisition and make it harder for people of color to purchase stations in larger markets. This is unacceptable.

The FCC seems not to care about the state of minority ownership. In fact, the FCC has no idea how many stations are actually owned by people of color because the Commission has failed to keep track of their own data. The only reason I'm able to cite statistics on minority ownership is due to the diligent work of a nonprofit group to conduct an accurate census and do the work the FCC should have conducted itself.

Last year, the FCC conducted several ownership studies prior to its December vote but failed to count 69 percent of minority-owned TV stations and 75 percent of female-owned stations. The failure of the FCC to properly address the crisis in minority ownership is stunning, since the U.S. Third Circuit Court of Appeals in 2004 chastised the FCC for its failure to address the issue of minority ownership the last time it attempted to allow for further media consolidation.

The lack of minority ownership and minority representation has real consequences for our society. It is no wonder many feel the media continues to marginalize people of color, causing our communities great harm.

There has been too much incompetency from independent regulatory agencies during the 8 years of the Bush administration. This lack of accountability has to stop, and I'm so proud of the millions of Americans who have spoken out through the years and have said "no" to media consolidation. This is especially true in the 35th Congressional District, where my constituents have fought so hard to block the deal between KTLA and the Los Angeles Times newspaper. On behalf of my constituents, I filed a brief in the continuing litigation to oppose the merger of these two giants that would have the effect of silencing the voices of many of my constituents.

It is going to be because of the many individual voices for free speech and diversity that we are going to continue to hold the FCC accountable for serving the public interest needs of the American people.

I promise I will continue to fight on and to fight for a media system that strengthens our democracy instead of weakening it.

PERSONAL EXPLANATION

Ms. WATERS. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent to note in the RECORD that I mistakenly voted "aye" on Roll Call 632, that was H.R. 2368, the Consolidated Security Disaster Assistance and Continuing Appropriations Act of 2009. I mistakenly voted "aye" on H.R. 2368. I did not realize the Defense appropriation and funding for the war in Iraq was included in the continuing appropriation. Had I known, I would have voted "no."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Without objection, the gentlewoman's statement will appear in the RECORD.

There was no objection.

WHAT THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. TIM MURPHY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. TIM MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, while Congress and our Nation is concerned about the crisis in our financial markets, it is important that we keep our ear to what the people of this Nation are saying. They're hearing words about liquidity, about the markets, about margins, there are even concerns about mortgage-backed securities. What they want to hear is the talk about three basic principles to get this Nation's economy back on track.

First and foremost is to protect the people—their nest eggs, their pensions, their homes. It is more important that we look at establishing that as the