

Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Chairman, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Remarks To The Federal Trade Commission News Media Workshop
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I want to thank Chairman Jon Leibowitz for inviting me to address you briefly today. It is a personal as well as a professional pleasure to be able to work so constructively with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC). The FTC deals with issues that touch the economic life of every American. Over the past several months, Chairman Leibowitz has made it clear that the FTC will aggressively protect American consumers, using both the agency's competition and consumer protection jurisdiction. Today's workshop is just one example of the FTC's vision, under its new leadership, to tackle 21st century consumer issues.

And I want to acknowledge the work on these issues of Chairman Genachowski of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). He has brought bold vision and strong executive leadership to the FCC. I know his agency is looking closely, in the public interest, at the future of media in the context of the agency's proceedings on broadband, an open internet, and related issues. He has my support for these important initiatives.

I wanted to attend today precisely because of the reasons Chairman Leibowitz expressed in his call for this conference.

When I became Chairman of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, less than a year ago, I was confronted with the challenges on two major items that we would be dealing with this year: health care reform and the effort to address climate change.

I also had a priority for legislation placing tobacco under FDA regulation and revising our new food safety laws. And we passed both in the House. The tobacco legislation is now law.

such as non-profit status, that would remove the pressures faced by publicly listed

Those advocating for public funding need to address additional questions. They need to articulate the scope of such support, in terms of the activities to be supported and the dollars required. They need to respond to the concern that government support of journalism would lead to government control of content. And they need to explain the source of revenues.

The Internet is replacing the public square as the place where people in cities and towns across America go every day to absorb news and information and to reflect on issues and their meaning for our lives.

The atomization of content has resulted in the fragmentation of audiences, so that the commercial basis to support a critical mass of authoritative and informed news and information is melting away.

And this is creating a public policy issue of profound import for our future.

It is not our job to plug dikes and deny the evolution of media. Indeed, there has been an explosion of hyperlocal journalism, along with the proliferation of websites. And many of them are doing an excellent job.

But for all their energy and entrepreneurial verve, do they address what is at stake here?

Jim Lehrer was interviewed by the *Post* in Monday's paper. He talked about the value of original reporting. "The shouting and opinion and jokes don't exist if there isn't first a story," he said.

And that's the issue: an ongoing critical mass of original reporting.

Mr. Lehrer talked about all the commentary on the health bill, but then he observed:

"But what was actually in the legislation? Where are you going to get that piece? You go to a serious news organization."

And what has been discussed here over the past two days is: the future of serious news organizations in this country.

At the White House Correspondents Association Dinner last May, President Obama said:

"You help all of us who serve at the pleasure of the American people do our jobs better by holding us accountable, by demanding honesty, by preventing us from taking shortcuts and falling into easy political games that people are so desperately weary of.

And that kind of reporting is worth preserving -- not just for your sake, but for the public's. We count on you to help us make sense of a complex world and tell the stories of our lives the way they happen, and we look for you for truth ..."

We have to figure out, together, how to preserve that kind of reporting.

As the Chairman of the House Committee on Energy and Commerce, my door is open for the best ideas and proposals and initiatives you have to offer.

Thank you.