

NLMC AGAINST A LA CARTE AND FOR SPECTRUM SET-ASIDES

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The National Latino Media Council (NLMC) has announced its strong opposition against proposed legislation on a la carte and a favorable position for set-aside spectrum for people of color. “In the pursuit for democracy in the media we must not forget about protecting diversity,” said retired Congressman Esteban Torres NLMC chairperson.

A la carte is being promoted by some media advocates as a way to reduce consumer costs and be able to restrict less family-friendly channels from coming into the home. However, a number of studies including a 2004 Federal Communications Commission report show that a la carte might in fact increase the cost per-channel. At the same time NLMC strongly believes that a la carte will have a negative impact on programming diversity in this country. “If a la carte is implemented without any provisions for protecting diversity, the two Latino networks currently on the air, Sí TV and LATV, will simply disappear because they do not yet command the viewership that more established networks have”, said Congressman Torres.

“The Latino community cannot afford to have this happen. It has taken too long for Latinos to own and/or operate English language networks whose target audience is English-speaking Latino youth. Sí TV and LATV reflect our culture, traditions and point of view, instilling pride and a grounded sense of identity and belonging to our youth. They also employ hundreds upon hundreds of Latinos both in front and back of camera at all levels giving them the experience necessary to favorably compete for any jobs at any network when, and if, those opportunities are offered,” said Alex Nogales, President/CEO of the National Hispanic Media Coalition.

NLMC is also concerned with the transition to Digital Television. “As Congress prepares to auction some of the most valuable public asset there is, the reclaimed spectrum, it is important that a portion of that spectrum be designated to preserve diversity in ownership,” said Jeff Penichet, Mexican American Opportunity Foundation representative. This can be done by ensuring that new entrants, specifically minorities and women, are allowed to participate in this auction by support of a program, such as the Telecom Development Fund (established in the 1996 Telecom Act) to provide the necessary access to capital needed for minorities and women to purchase the set-aside spectrum. Diversity in ownership, we have found, represents diversity in programming and ideas and it is therefore crucial that Latino representation be part and parcel of spectrum ownership.

NLMC is comprised of 15 of the largest Latino Civil Rights and advocacy organizations in the nation and advocates for diversity in the media, especially as it impacts the Latino community.

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