

CATHIE MARTIN'S WORKING MEDIA ON ONE SIDE

And her FCC Chair hubby, Kevin Martin, is working media on the other side. The LAT reports (h/t Sirota) that the FCC is leaking information on key votes to big stakeholders. Since there's a restriction on lobbying in the week before a vote, this has the effect of making it impossible for those representing citizens to lobby in a timely fashion.

People are allowed to submit comments and meet with FCC commissioners and staff until one week before a public meeting. The FCC circulates drafts of its proposed rulings and decisions among its staff so they know what items are scheduled to be voted on. But the information is confidential, and FCC rules prohibit anyone from releasing it without the chairman's authorization.

"FCC officials told us that, for stakeholders to successfully make their case before FCC, 'timing is everything,' " the report said. "Specifically, if a stakeholder knows that a proposed rule has been scheduled for a vote and may be voted on in three weeks, that stakeholder can schedule a meeting with FCC officials before the rule is voted on."

Those who don't know about an upcoming vote until the agenda is announced are frozen out of lobbying by the one-week prohibition, the GAO said.

"FCC staff who disclose nonpublic information about when an issue will be considered could be providing an advantage to some stakeholders, allowing them to time their lobbying efforts to maximize their impact," the report said.

So we've got Kevin Martin giving (presumably) the telecoms an unfair advantage in rulemaking. All the while his wife is declaring that "Dick Cheney controls Tim Russert." This one couple pretty much has the media conglomerates by the balls. But don't you worry—I'm sure it will have no negative effect on our democracy.

And while we're reading this article, if you had to guess which large (presumably) telecom this is, what would you guess?

"One stakeholder — representing a large organization that is involved in numerous rulemakings — told us that FCC staff call them and tell them what items are scheduled for a vote," the report said.

Hmmm. Large organization, numerous rulemakings (which probably means net neutrality and consolidation and so on). This wouldn't have anything to do with the United States of AT&T, would it? I mean, just because AT&T has taken over DOJ and the White House doesn't mean it has taken over the FCC, does it?

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