

State of Connecticut

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
ATTORNEY GENERAL



Hartford

April 8, 2009

Sam Zell
Owner
Tribune Company
435 North Michigan Avenue
Chicago, IL 60611

Dear Mr. Zell:

I write concerning the Tribune Company's recent announcement that it will consolidate the operations of the Hartford Courant, Connecticut's largest daily newspaper, with Hartford's two remaining television stations, WTIC-TV and WTXN-TV. This plan will effectively merge three principal news media outlets in the Hartford market into a single entity, raising concerns about public access to diverse and competing sources of information.

On its face, this arrangement appears to violate the Federal Communications Commission ban on a company owning a TV station and newspaper in the same market. I note that Tribune is currently operating under an FCC waiver allowing it to own both the Hartford Courant and Hartford's two remaining broadcast television stations. *See* FCC MB Docket No. 07-119, *In the Matter of Shareholders of Tribune Company* (November 30, 2007). I am concerned that allowing these entities to fully merge into one news and information operation goes well beyond what the FCC intended when it granted Tribune a two-year limited waiver.

At the same time, I well understand and appreciate the fast changing, extremely difficult media environment and the challenges it presents, especially to newspapers. I support exploration of innovative, alternative arrangements and business models that may allow newspapers to survive and continue to play their vital role holding government and business accountable. These new business models or partnerships may be "the future," as one of your executives has characterized it. To advance this vision and goal, it must expand access to information and competition, not produce media monopolies that shut out voices, perspectives and important news stories.

Most especially, if it offers a promising, important new model, it must also be consistent with the law. Merely because it provides the prospect of success or survival is insufficient reason to ignore the law. It may be reason to change the law, by statute or regulatory action.

To better understand this merger and its legal ramifications, as well as its consequences for news gathering in Hartford and the state, I request answers to the following questions:

- Will job losses result from this consolidation? If so, how many, what type and which organization will bear the brunt of layoffs?
- Is consolidation intended to strengthen -- but maintain -- two distinct news outlets? Or will one news outlet absorb and eliminate the other?
- Is this consolidation intended to ultimately extinguish the printed edition of the Hartford Courant, replacing it with television and online editions?
- Will one political, local, sports, etc. editor make coverage decisions for both entities or will the Courant and Fox61 maintain their own editors who make coverage decisions independent of each other? If there is partial consolidation, how similar will the Courant's and Fox61's news coverage be? For example, will management require that all or most stories on the front page of the Courant also be top stories on Fox61?
- Will the two organizations collaborate and coordinate on all stories? Will it still be possible for one news organization to scoop the other?
- To what extent will advertising functions and business operations be combined? Will advertisers have the same number and variety of choices?

I am deeply concerned that this consolidation may result in significant job losses or diminished choices and competition now benefiting consumers, business advertisers and others. Over the past several years, our region has seen significant shrinkage in its news industry, compounding economic difficulties and diminishing diversity. I sincerely hope that Tribune's plans for the Courant and Fox61 reverse this deeply troublesome trend and expand journalist opportunity.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL

RB/pas

c: Rich Graziano, Publisher
Hartford Courant