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Community Discussion of Proposed Sale of Dayton Daily News and WHIO on July 29

Dayton—Common Cause Ohio, the Kiplinger Program in Public Affairs Journalism, and the University of Dayton’s Human Rights Center are hosting a community meeting to talk about what the proposed sale of the Dayton Daily News, WHIO Radio and TV, to a private equity fund might mean to Dayton.

The meeting — **“Media and Democracy: What the proposed sale of Cox Media might mean to Dayton”** — will be held from 6:00 - 7:30 p.m., Monday, July 29, in the auditorium at the Daniel J. Curran Place (formerly the University of Dayton’s River Campus), 1700 South Patterson Blvd. It is free and open to the public. Light refreshments will be served.

The program will explore how media and democracy intersect and the importance of strong local media. **Catherine Turcer**, Executive Director of Common Cause Ohio, will moderate the discussion. **Yosef Getachew**, Director of Common Cause’s Media and Democracy program, will provide an overview of media consolidation across the country and its impact on communities.

Panelists include **Bob Daley**, former political reporter (Dayton Journal Herald, Dayton Daily News, Congressional Quarterly); **Dr. Jim DeBrosse**, retired assistant professor of journalism and a veteran newspaper reporter who worked 20 years for Cox newspapers in Dayton; **Dr. Joel Pruce**, assistant professor in the University of Dayton’s Department of Political Science; **Melissa Rodriguez.**, community activist; **Tom Roberts**, former member of the Ohio General Assembly and Ohio Conference President of the NAACP; **Kevin Z. Smith**, Director of the Kiplinger Program for Public Affairs Journalism and a former national president of the Society of Professional Journalists and the **Nan Whaley, Mayor of Dayton.**

Background:

The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) is considering the merger of Cox Media, private equity fund Apollo Global Management, and Northwest Broadcasting. Comment on the proposal is being sought by the FCC in the public phase of the review process.

There is a long record of private equity firms buying newspapers only to implement cost-cutting measures like freezing wages, laying off reporters and consolidating newsroom functions. Apollo has a net worth of \$7 billion and its holdings include Claire’s, Caesars Entertainment Corporation, CareerBuilder, Novitex Enterprise Solutions, ADT, and Rackspace. Apollo has indicated that it wanted to be a national player in the broadcast market.

Apollo is primarily interested in Cox's 13 television stations and offered \$3 billion for them. Cox Media Group Ohio is what the company calls a "unique platform – the Dayton Daily News, WHIO-TV and three radio stations. To acquire WHIO-TV, Apollo seeks to purchase the newspaper and radio stations also. Apollo said the Dayton Daily News would be operated under a joint agreement with Cox holding 37% if the merger is approved.

Panelist Bob Daley, a veteran reporter and long-time resident of the Dayton area, sums up the problem this way, "The media in Dayton has been consolidating since 1947 and now we may be heading for a news desert."

Voting and the quality of representational democracy is dependent upon access to good information from a variety of sources. That's why in May, Common Cause and Common Cause Ohio, joined by the United Church of Christ, filed a petition with the FCC asking the agency to deny this proposed merger.

If the merger is approved, Apollo would own 25 television stations putting a significant amount of media ownership in the control of a private equity firm. Since 2004, about a third of the largest newspaper chains are now owned by private equity firms. The quality of news and information has significantly diminished under private equity control. These firms typically implement cost cutting strategies that eliminate needed local reporters. Communities are left with reduced access to important information.

"Turning local news media over to giant, out-of-touch corporations robs communities of diverse viewpoints, local character and especially the stories of those whose voices are seldom heard -- the poor and people of color," said panelist Jim DeBrosse describing his concerns about the merger.