

FCC proposes \$13.4M fine for TV-station owner Sinclair

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This Thursday, Dec. 14, 2017, photo, shows the seal of the Federal Communications Commission before a meeting in Washington. On Thursday, Dec. 21, 2017, the FCC proposed a \$13.4 million fine on TV-station owner Sinclair for not identifying paid programming as advertising. (AP Photo/Jacquelyn Martin)

The Federal Communications Commission has proposed a \$13.4 million fine on TV-station owner Sinclair for not identifying paid programming

as advertising.

Sinclair Broadcast Group Inc. is one of the country's largest owners of TV stations. It pays networks ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox for the national news, shows and sports it airs on those stations and airs local news shows.

The FCC said Thursday that Sinclair's Salt Lake City [station](#) produced news story-like programming for local news broadcasts and longer 30-minute TV programs for the Huntsman Cancer Foundation. The FCC said these spots that weren't properly identified as ads aired more than 1,700 times in 2016 across 64 Sinclair-owned TV stations and also for 13 other stations not owned by the company. The FCC said Sinclair apparently didn't tell these stations that it didn't own that it was providing an ad.

The FCC's two Democratic commissioners dissented from the penalty on Sinclair, saying it was too small. Republicans are in the majority of the agency's leadership.

Sinclair, based in Hunt Valley, Maryland, has 30 days to contest the proposed fine or pay it.

"Any absence of sponsorship identification in these public service segments was unintended and a result of simple human error," Sinclair said in a statement Thursday, adding that it would contest the fine.

Sinclair is awaiting regulatory approval for its proposed takeover of rival Tribune Media. The Justice Department and the FCC must approve the deal. Critics who tend to oppose media mergers say the Republican-controlled-FCC has paved the way for such TV-industry consolidation by relaxing ownership rules for broadcasters.

The Utah-based Huntsman Cancer Foundation, founded by billionaire industrialist Jon Huntsman Sr. and his wife, raises funds for the Huntsman Cancer Institute, a [cancer](#) research center and hospital in Salt Lake City. The Huntsman Institute did not immediately respond to a request for comment Thursday.

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