

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS, APPROVING**

Re: *In the Matter of Creation of a Low Power Radio Service, MM Docket No. 99-25*

It often seems like those of us troubled by media consolidation are relegated to playing defense. The big media companies are nothing if not persistent: lobbying for the elimination or relaxation of ownership limits, seeking waivers of existing rules, proposing merger upon merger and daring regulators to draw the line. In radio, the results have been particularly distressing. Runaway consolidation since the 1996 Act has left us with homogenized content, national play lists, outsourced news, a dumbed-down civic dialogue, and shameful levels of minority and female ownership.

That's why low power radio is such a breath of fresh air. It is a positive response to what ails us. These are truly local stations run by local organizations. They provide an outlet for local voices and local talent. They cover issues of importance to local and very often under-served communities. Low power is truly radio of the people, by the people, and for the people. We cannot let it perish from the earth.

This item makes good progress in putting LPFM on a firmer foundation. In particular, I welcome the decisions on ownership and eligibility that will ensure that LPFM retains its local character; the initial steps we take to limit the preclusive effect of existing translator applications on LPFM; and the initial steps we take to protect LPFM from full-power station encroachment. But we have a lot of work ahead of us. In this regard, I am pleased that my colleagues have committed to further addressing some of the key issues within the next six months, including the priority between LPFM and translator stations, full-power encroachment, and a proposal to permit LPFM stations to use a more flexible contour-based methodology for locating available channels. These proposals—especially if Congress adopts the important recommendation in this item to remove the third adjacency restrictions—could vastly expand licensing opportunities for LPFM stations. Our united goal should be to clear away obstacles to low power and to open a window to license many more such stations as soon as we can.

As important as LPFM is, however, let's never allow ourselves to see it as a complete substitute for full power service. Nor should we ever be lulled into a mind-set that says, "Well, let low power cover that stuff and let the full power stations continue on their happy way." The American people still rely on full power stations for much of their news, information and entertainment. And those full power stations are on the air because they pledged to serve the public interest in return for being allowed to make what is still a very good living. The emergence and strengthening of LPFM does not affect our duty, in any shape, manner or form, to ensure that *all* broadcasters serve the core public interest goals of localism, competition and diversity.

I am pleased to support this as a good step forward, I thank my colleagues and the Bureau for their work. And I want to commend all those many dedicated members of the low power community who have worked so hard and accomplished so much in an environment that has been far less friendly towards them than it should have been.

