

Statement of FCC Commissioner Mignon L. Clyburn

Re: Creation of a Low Power Radio Service

“Low power radio is truly radio of the people, by the people, and for the people.” This sentiment was proudly exclaimed by Commissioner Michael Copps last year when we first began implementing the Local Community Radio Act. And today, we take a major step toward the creation of a media landscape more reflective of the greatness in nation.

Congressman Michael Doyle and Congressman Lee Terry – special thanks are due to you, for none of this would be possible without your tireless efforts. Now, more constituents in Pittsburgh and Omaha may have their voices heard, and their interests expressed, and I can only imagine how elated you must be to know that your friends, family and neighbors very soon may have enhanced entertainment and information options.

Over the past several months, we have been inundated with stories from Low-Powered FM station supporters: tribal entities in the Southwest, Hmong communities in the Midwest, farm workers at the Southern tip of Florida, science fiction lovers up north in Maine, high-school students and senior citizens in Maui, liberals, conservatives, and groups across the board... making their voices heard through discussions and advocacy for unique and interesting programs found only on these radio properties.

So it is in this order that I am pleased to affirm we will greatly increase the number of LPFM stations to augment the airwaves through a process that waives the second-adjacent channel spacing requirement. What this means is that in major urban markets, space will be freed up for LPFM stations and they will soon achieve a share of the dial previously dominated mainly by larger, national entities. Through this Order, we take a resource that has been indispensable in rural communities and bring it into major metropolitan areas.

Extraordinary diversity can be found in major cities across this great nation, so I can only imagine how urban communities will utilize this great resource. Ethnically and culturally-diverse people will have a greater opportunity to unite and share their collective experiences with others. In that vein, one proposed project that got my attention is an effort championed by the Gullah People’s Movement in South Carolina. If granted a license, this applicant proposes to feature as its first offering a program hosted by octogenarians who plan to convey the oral history of African-Americans in the lowcountry of South Carolina and Georgia.

This order is a victory for applicants like them and an opportunity for those who express themselves through other artistic means as well. The music lovers on my staff are hoping for an explosion of “indie music” returning to the airwaves, where listeners can tap a variety of genres now primarily found only on the Internet and satellite radio.

The FCC recognizes that radio remains a vital tool not only for niche interests but for the communications needs of the entire nation. I am reminded of that LPFM property in New Orleans that stayed on the air throughout the Hurricane Katrina crisis, battling rising flood waters but keeping Bayou residents informed after every other area FM radio station went silent. In the absence of electricity, Internet access, and cell phone coverage, many of those affected by Hurricane Sandy turned to battery-powered radios as their sole link to the outside world. In the months ahead, there will be no shortage of opportunities for community radio stations to unite communities, keep them connected, and help them rebuild and move on in the event of terrible losses.

Just over a year ago, I spoke about striking a balance between competing interests in this docket. Today's order represents months of working not only with LPFM supporters but with organizations representing the interests of translator applicants as well. Through their tireless advocacy, we reached a solution that will allow translators and LPFM stations to complement one another in what we trust will be a richer and more vibrant media landscape.

Both translators and LPFMs connect users in rural and underserved areas with programming that would not be available otherwise, and the compromise in today's order will allow the vast majority of translator applicants to continue serving these communities. Indeed, during the last application window, 97% of translator applicants filed fewer than the 50-application limit we put in place today. This limit will ensure that translator and LPFM licenses go to those applicants that are committed to connecting users with content while curbing counter-productive speculative behavior. To date, over 25% of translator authorizations have not been constructed, and nearly 40% have been assigned to parties other than the original applicants. Much of this represents speculative engagement, and many of these licenses could have been granted to LPFM *and* translator applicants who have a vision for community use.

We not only make more room for LPFM stations, but this order also ensures that LPFM licenses go to those applicants who can best contribute to this thriving landscape. Where there are multiple or competing applicants for the same coverage area, we employ a point system which gives preference to stations that best reflect the varied interests of their communities.

Origination of local content in this regard is key. How better to communicate the interests of a community than by producing content *in and from* that community? Preference will be given to organizations that have an established presence in those neighborhoods, by keeping a local studio staffed regularly, and producing content locally. For then a station has a greater opportunity to stay better connected to the community where it operates.

We also understand that there is no one voice for any geographical area, so preference will be granted to new entrants – that is, to applicants who have no attributable interest in another broadcasting entity. With a diversity of viewpoints and ideas, we want

to ensure that citizens across the spectrum of thoughts and ideas will remain connected and engaged with content tailored to *them*.

Finally, I am ecstatic that we have an actual date for the opening of the filing window. So no matter what, my spirits will still be soaring on that day, as will those of countless entities and individuals as we embark on an endeavor that could potentially add tremendously new dimension to our media ecosystem.

Special thanks are due to the stakeholders involved in reaching today's compromise, notably REC, Common Frequency, and Prometheus. Their advocacy for the future of radio is inspiring, and this order is a testament to their hard work and dedication. Peter "The Oracle" Doyle, Jim Bradshaw, and others in the Media Bureau, including the engineers, thank you for an enormous amount of heavy lifting in this proceeding and for the work which will continue after the filing window closes.

And again, Congressmen Doyle and Terry, thank you. When this Order frees up broadcast space in the "Steel City" and the "Gateway to the West," I'm sure your constituents will join us in praising you.

I for one can't wait to tune in and further engage with the communities that I am committed to serve, not only as a policymaker, but as a fellow citizen.

Thank you.