



New Mexico Broadcasters Association
2333 Wisconsin St., NE | Albuquerque, NM 87110 | 505.881.4444

Localism

Last year the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposed to substantially increase regulatory burdens on local broadcasters. Of particular concern, the FCC suggested that restrictive changes should be made to the rules regarding the location of stations' main studios and the unattended operation of stations. These regulatory changes could cost broadcasters millions of dollars to relocate their main studios and to hire additional staff for stations 24 hours a day. These requirements would impose a significant financial hardship on many stations, especially smaller ones and, as NAB, the Minority Media and Telecommunications Council, and the National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters have emphasized, ones owned by members of minority groups.

These requirements would make stations less able to serve their local communities by diverting scarce resources away from programming and other services that directly benefit viewers and listeners.

The FCC has also tentatively concluded that (1) it should adopt programming-based guidelines for the processing of station renewal applications, and (2) local stations should establish permanent community advisory boards to ascertain the needs of their communities. These intrusive requirements would similarly needlessly burden local stations in today's competitive media marketplace and make them less able to serve the public interest. As hundreds of broadcasters have demonstrated to the FCC, local stations acknowledge and embrace their obligation to serve the public. Local broadcasters offer local and national news and other informational programming including political, vital emergency information, and entertainment to viewers and listeners free of charge. They also provide additional, unique community service by giving a voice to local organizations and entities and raising monies for charities, local groups and causes, and needy individuals.

Broadcasters do not need increased governmental regulation to force them to serve their local communities. Local stations work every day to understand the needs and interests of their audiences and to provide programming and other services addressing those needs and interests. Indeed, broadcasters must do so to retain audiences (and thus advertisers) and remain relevant and economically viable in the highly competitive 21st century marketplace.

Moreover, the FCC's proposals would turn back the clock to reinstate regulations that the agency found ineffective, unnecessary and constitutionally suspect in the less competitive media marketplace of the 1980s. While broadcasters agree that serving local communities is important, the re-imposition of burdensome and outdated restrictions is not the proper approach. A one-size-fits-all regulatory approach imposed from Washington, D.C. will not result in local stations serving their diverse communities more effectively. In fact, in today's financially challenging marketplace, reinstating costly regulations will only impair stations' abilities to serve local communities.