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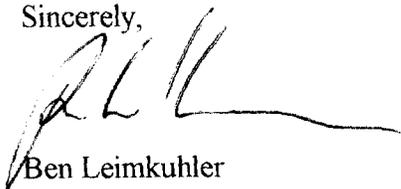
Office of the Secretary
FCC, Room 222
1919 M St., NW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Mr./Ms. Secretary:

Enclosed please find one original plus nine copies of a letter I have written in support of FCC
Petition for Rulemaking RM-9242.

My letter addresses the importance of low power, low cost radio for people living in small to
medium sized midwestern cities which are not adequately served by current media news and
information sources.

Sincerely,



Ben Leimkuhler
845 Illinois Street
Lawrence, KS 66044

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MMB

Dear FCC Commissioner:

I am not a radio operator nor an anarchist supporter of pirate radio, but I believe strongly that low power, low cost radio should be allowed a place in our nation's airwaves.

During my graduate student days, I sat on the board of directors of the independent student media company at the University of Illinois which operated the student radio station. That small radio station, like the student station in my current hometown of Lawrence, Kansas, serves as an extremely important creative outlet for young people.

Before coming Lawrence, I spent two years working in Helsinki, where most of the radio stations are (or were at that time) state operated. Somewhat surprisingly, there was institutional support provided for a youth station, Radio City, which was essentially run by young people and for young people. I again saw how a functioning alternative voice can provide a "safe" outlet for creative young people. Both here and abroad, the youth stations routinely play loud rebellious music and champion political causes that are not widely held among the general population.

Finland is also a place where the broadest spectrum of public opinion receives a fair hearing. Even if the average Finn is quite measured in his or her political opinions and views, there is a widespread belief in the need to include all elements of the political spectrum in the public discourse.

Just as youth and university stations have been found to be helpful in providing creative outlets for young people who might otherwise express themselves in less wholesome ways, low power radio can increase the sense of enfranchisement and involvement in society of adults with alternative cultural and political interests. In this way, low power radio can help to open up our communities to a wider scrutiny and questioning, ultimately leading to a stronger, more inclusive society.

When I arrived in Lawrence, I was aware that the media would be much different than what I had experienced before. I was not prepared for the sort of news blackout that my town's powerful newspaper/TV monopoly has imposed on alternative political opinion and local artistic/cultural activities. Oddly, Lawrence has the largest per-capita population of artists in the nation, but you would never know it from reading the paper. The owner of the media conglomerate is proud of his position on many national conservative boards. His newspaper regularly publishes extremely conservative views (he writes his own editorials and a separate column), denies space to alternative positions, avoids coverage of alternative political rallies and events, alters news stories with slanted headlines and avoids investigative coverage of questionable ethics in local

government. The three established local radio stations (two commercial rock stations; an NPR affiliate offering mostly classical music) have carved out niches that do not include either (i) covering local arts and culture or (ii) covering local news and politics in any substantial way.

The situation has grown rather desperate, and there are many of us, squarely in the mainstream by US standards, who desperately crave an alternative source of information on local politics and artistic/cultural happenings. We now get much of our news and information from word of mouth and xerox'ed newsletters of sometimes questionable accuracy which are distributed around town. It is as if the golden "media age" has never happened here, as if we must recreate the communication methods of the last century. Why cannot media serve the social, cultural, and political needs of all the people of our small town?

This is not a city of a million people, where one can simply choose to read an alternative paper, this is a town of 80,000 in the heart of farm country. There may be many of us here who wish for another source information, but hardly enough to merit the founding of a new newspaper (though several have tried) or even less a television station. Where are we to turn? The internet is promising, but still quite unsettled and still not available to many of my fellow Kansans. Why not inexpensive low power radio?

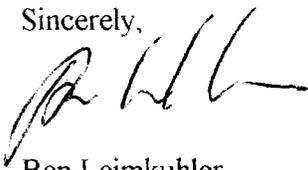
Kansas is not so densely populated that there is no space left in the spectrum for another small station. In using low power, a station is almost automatically forced to have a community constituency. This means that low power radio really is community radio in the best sense of the term. In KAW-FM, the low power radio station recently established here in Lawrence, I and many others have finally found an airing of a broad spectrum of political views and opinions. We now have a vibrant political discussion, similar to what you might find in a large city or in any European town, and we have an opportunity to hear from the writers, musicians and artists who live among us.

My city was founded by Amos Lawrence, a Massachusetts businessman and abolitionist who paid a small fortune to transport doctors, lawyers, carpenters, and teachers to the prairie to found a bastion of fervent free-state belief in a state which would otherwise have entered the union as a slave-state. Lawrence paid by being burned to the ground twice, and 200 men were shot during Quantrill's infamous raid. Those early settlers were dreamers. The existence of community radio, along with other related trends, has started to rekindle a spark that was almost completely dead on the great plains, even if it was the utopian vision of the early settlers of Lawrence: the dream of the sophisticated small city in a rural landscape.

While the need for low cost, low power radio may not seem an important issue in New York or Washington, out here on the prairie ~~everything~~ is low cost. The price of a new powerful transmitter that would meet current FCC guidelines seems simply astronomical to us. Moreover, the new low power station serves a constituency with a disproportionately large number of minority group members and poorer families; it is unlikely that adequate funding will be able to be found to meet the current FCC requirements if policy is not changed.

As evidence for how important this small station is for Lawrence, KS, witness the recent proclamation of unanimous support for KAW-FM by the mayor and city commission, as moderate and cautious a group as you are likely find anywhere in the US. Lawrence needs KAW-FM. Please do not stand in the way of our vision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Leimkuhler', written in a cursive style.

Ben Leimkuhler
845 Illinois Street
Lawrence, KS 66044