

I have three relevant comments on this new proposal for low power radio broadcast licensing.

Seven years ago, I had a choice in what I listened to on the radio. Specifically, within the broad scope of 'rock/alternative' listening, the choices were reasonably plentiful. Today, I count only two to three stations to choose from. This seems to have little correlation to the actual market forces. Namely, Chancellor Communications has chosen to buy up two of my favorite stations that feature a fairly similar playlist. Shortly after the purchase, the company dramatically changed the format of one station to increase the market share of the company, as opposed to the share of each station. In short, my choice in programming has been limited over the past seven years or so. Also, I drove to Houston a few weeks ago. Chancellor ruled the airwaves there, also. Should one company have so much control over what I hear over the airwaves in more than one city? This seems to hinder competition.

My university, The University of Texas at Dallas, has a small body of students interested in a university radio station. It's something that has yet make it through the process. From all I hear, we may be just barely at the point of a critical mass in terms of interest, but more importantly, it seems that the amount of paperwork and hoop jumping required to get the project off the ground is overly discouraging. The bulk of the regulations, and rules is very disheartening. A streamlined, simpler process of application and set up would help the radio project at UTD finally work. The 1000 watt power class would be good for the school, provided the start up process is made simpler.

This low power initiative may be too far past it's time. Give the internet a few more years of improved bandwidth, and broadcast over the 'net could make FM radio obsolete. Y'all may have shown up to the party a little late on this one. The 'net would make for more competition, which I love to see.

Choice is limited in my market, and easy access to upstart radio stations would help (esp. for universities), but the 'net may make it all irrelevant.

On an unrelated note: the AH Belo Corporation owns the only major newspaper in Dallas, and also owns a major network affiliate station