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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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July 21, 1999

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Ms. Magalie R. Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Portals II, Filing Counter, TW-A325
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: MM Docket No. 99-25

Dear Ms. Salas

Transmitted herewith, on behalf of Ohio Educational Telecommunications, are the original and four copies of its Comments in the above-referenced rule making proceeding.

Very truly yours

Stanley S. Neustadt

Stanley S. Neustadt

Encl.

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JUL 21 1999

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

BEFORE THE

Federal Communications Commission

In the Matter of	)	**MM Docket No. 99-25**
	)	
Creation of a Low	)	**RM-9208**
Power Radio Service	)	**RM-9242**
	)	

COMMENTS OF OHIO EDUCATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS

Ohio Educational Telecommunications ("OET") files these Comments in response to the Notice of Proposed Rule Making released in the above captioned proceeding on February 3, 1999. OET respectfully requests that action on this proposal be deferred for a sufficient period for the Commission to determine more precisely the technical interference effects of the proposed new service on existing facilities, particularly on such subsidiary services as the radio reading services provided on subcarriers of existing stations . It should be understood that these Comments set forth the views of OET, and do not necessarily represent the views of any of the public broadcast stations in the State of Ohio. In support of its views, OET states:

1. OET, which has participated in many rule making proceedings which have involved or affected public broadcasting either directly or indirectly, is an independent agency of the State of Ohio, created by Act of the General Assembly of the State of Ohio. It was created to foster the growth and development of public broadcasting in Ohio, and to provide all Ohio residents with access to the services provided by public broadcasting stations. To this end, the OET network links Ohio's 12 educational television stations, 30 educational radio stations, and 9 radio

reading services in a statewide system, and provides grants to those stations to subsidize operations and programming.

2. The radio reading services, with which these Comments are particularly concerned, provide timely and topical print information to blind and other print-handicapped individuals, primarily via FM subcarriers of OET's noncommercial educational radio affiliates. The total number of print-handicapped individuals reached via the subcarriers in Ohio is nearly 12,000. Nationally, there are approximately 150 radio reading services which provide information to an estimated 1,000,000 listeners.

3. Whatever the merits of the creation of a new class of low power FM ("LPFM") stations proposed in the NPRM, the current proposal proposes the reduction of existing standards of protection against interference. This potentially means that at least some of our listeners will receive signals of poorer quality, or even be totally disenfranchised.

4. The current proposal looks toward the relaxation, or even elimination, of the technical filing requirements for new applicants. This would place the entire burden on the NCE stations with which our radio reading services are affiliated to study each application to ascertain whether it would cause harmful interference. This would further strain their financial resources. Some other method must be devised for applicants to demonstrate that a grant of their applications would not have a detrimental effect on either the main channel, or on a subcarrier reading service.

5. The provision of opportunity for increased local voices for groups, including minorities, women, ethnic minorities, and others, which now have little access to broadcast facilities is surely a laudable objective. However, if this goal can be attained only at the expense of a currently served disabled constituency it would seem of dubious value. The Commission has

long recognized that provision of radio reading services for the blind, visually disabled, and print-impaired is important to the national interest. In 1983, in the course of determining that public radio stations could use their subcarriers for remunerative purposes, the Commission stated unequivocally that the new flexibility must "* * *ensure that neither existing nor potential radio reading services for the blind are diminished * * *by the pursuit of commercial subcarrier undertakings." *Commercial Use of Public FM SCA's,* 54 RR2d 25,36 (1983). It stated further that it was confident that public broadcasters were cognizant of the importance of these services. *Id.* So far as OET is aware, the Commission's position on the importance of radio reading services has not changed. The proposal for LPFM stations has the potential to seriously degrade the quality of these services.

6. In light of these considerations, OET respectfully requests that the Commission defer any action in this matter until it is determined that to proceed would not adversely affect the nation's radio reading services and the thousands of blind and print-handicapped persons being served.

Respectfully submitted

OHIO EDUCATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS

By: _____

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July 19,1999