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MM 99-25

Low Power

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This is to voice my strong support in favor of the FCC's proposals to license low-powered community FM stations. I have worked in commercial and non-commercial broadcasting in the past, and have spent years monitoring American radio stations around the country. Due to the de-regulation which has allowed the consolidation of many radio stations under the ownership of a few large corporations, competition has suffered and "minority" programming has become less available on the radio dial. Creativity is stifled by tightly controlled formats which change according to the latest market research. FM stations around the country have become predictable in the sameness of their sound. If one lives in a market without an innovative college radio station, it is unlikely that there will be anything of extraordinary value, very little diversity, no "world" music, no folk music, perhaps no jazz or even classical music. Certainly none of the types of sound art described in Sarah Vowell's recent book, Radio On, is heard on the large commercial outlets who are primarily concerned with the bottom line. Even if there is an NPR affiliate, there is no guarantee that this station won't duplicate the chatter that persists (such as WETA-FM in Washington, DC is now doing during weekday mornings.)

Low-Powered Community broadcasters should not be such a threat to the large and profitable FM stations. They will most likely offer alternatives which the latter have ruled out as not mass-appeal enough, not profitable enough, not conventional enough. There are a few stations around which offer high quality, eclectic, creative programming, such as WRNR in the Annapolis area, or KPIG in Freedom, CA. But they are increasingly rare and hard to sustain. Most of the listeners in the Washington, DC area cannot pick up WRNR. LPFM would fill an important need for fans of alternative, creative radio. Don't let the NAB or the established industry prohibit even the mildest form of competition. Let LPFM take root.

Thank you for your attention.

Ronald M. Povich

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