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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Honorable Chairman William E. Kennard,
Federal Communications Commission
The Portals
455 Twelfth Street S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Honorable Chairman Kennard:

I did not write the following letter, but I agree with the original authors and wish to add my voice to those urging you to end the monopolization of the airwaves.

We are writing to commend you and the Federal Communications Commission for taking action on an issue of great importance to us -- ending the 21-year ban on community access to the airwaves. We have become increasingly concerned about the growing concentration of the media in our country and are pleased that the Commission is responding to public outcry to increase opportunities for local communities to use our radio airwaves.

One of the fundamental tenets of our democracy is to ensure that diverse interests have opportunities to express themselves, not merely to be the recipients of what a handful of other people tell them. It is a nonnegotiable component of our right to a free press and free speech

Radio is perhaps the most qualified of any media outlet to provide community access. It is a relatively inexpensive medium to produce and is well-suited to cover community issues and local culture. Unfortunately, over the past three years the U.S. radio broadcasting industry has experienced an unprecedented wave of consolidation and mergers. As a result, the electronic medium best suited to inexpensive, local programming has become arguably the most regimented and centralized of our major media.

Even a multimillionaire would have trouble entering the radio broadcasting industry today, because economies of scale (permitted by deregulation) demand that a firm own numerous stations in several markets to be even remotely competitive. As for the person of average means, their lot is limited to being a passive consumer of an increasingly monopolistic industry that has less and less competitive pressure to heed the diverse, local needs of listeners. And, for poor people and others who are considered unimportant to the advertising community, radio increasingly has little to offer. Again, the great tragedy of this situation is that radio is the ideal medium to provide an accessible local service for democratic communications of interest and value to the entire population.

Awarding licenses for new low power FM radio stations would empower local communities with a new public forum to express its many voices, cultures, ideas, and needs.

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Low power radio stations would create much needed public forums for a variety of groups -- including community activists, youth, ethnic and linguistic minorities, the religious community, local artists and cultural associations -- and provide a forum for dialogue and debate about important local and public interest issues. These kinds of stations would strengthen community identity in urban neighborhoods, rural towns and other communities which are currently too small to win attention from "mainstream," profit-driven media.

The strong interest in independent radio stations shows that the creation of low power radio service would have wide public support. The tremendous demand for microradio is demonstrated by the emergence of a national Free Radio Movement, widespread civil disobedience, constitutional challenges of the Commission's aggressively enforced 21-year ban, as well as the proliferation of unlicensed community radio stations supported by local government, whose operators broadcast at the risk of financial losses, seizure of property, arrest, and in some cases, imprisonment.

In addition, the Commission has stated that in the last year alone, 13,000 people inquired regarding the possibility of obtaining a license for low power broadcasting in their communities.

In support with the efforts of the Microradio Empowerment Coalition (<http://www.nlgcdc.org/mec/index.html>), we urge you to legalize microradio in order to benefit non-commercial community groups whose interest in microradio is to communicate, to educate, and to inform, not to make money. We are confident you agree that broad citizen access to information and culture is at the heart of a democratic society.

Signed,



Lori Morgan

cc: Commissioner Gloria Tristani,
Commissioner Michael Powell,
Commissioner Susan Ness,
Commissioner Harold Furchgott-Roth