

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER ROBERT M. MCDOWELL**

Re: Amendment of Service and Eligibility Rules for FM Broadcast Translator Stations, MB Docket No. 07-172, RM-11338; *Report and Order*

Today the Commission gives a much-needed and overdue shot in the arm to AM radio stations. With this Order, we provide AM stations an opportunity to strengthen the contributions that they make in furthering our long-standing public policy goals of localism, competition and diversity in broadcasting. By permitting the nation's oldest broadcast service to use existing FM translators to fill coverage gaps within their authorized contours, we hope to bolster AM stations' ability to clearly reach and attract local listeners throughout daytime *and* evening hours. The record in this proceeding shows that the Commission's previous efforts to assist AM broadcasters to overcome their technical constraints have not been successful – in part because other wireless uses have proliferated over time, fragmenting the audio marketplace while also exacerbating the interference problems that makes some AM stations hard to hear.

Competitive markets cannot deliver a full measure of benefits to consumers if consumers cannot take advantage of all of their options. AM stations' inability to reach all potential listeners within their existing authorized contours throughout the 24-hour day undermines our goals of fostering competition, localism and diversity because it deprives listeners of the news and talk programming that has become the hallmark of the AM band. The record before us confirms that many AM broadcasters do an excellent job of serving targeted demographics and interests within their communities. Furthermore, the evidence shows that AM broadcasters provide hyper-local information to many areas of the country, especially small towns and rural areas that might otherwise be deprived of such content. The rule changes we adopt here reflect a reasonable compromise to give AM broadcasters more options and, at the same time, allow for the future growth of new competitors in the low power FM service.

I am pleased that we adopt this relief measure during this extraordinarily difficult time for broadcasters. Traditional media in general face unprecedented challenges to their survival. Facing fierce competition from a plethora of "new media" market entrants, traditional media's decades-old business models are being shaken to their core. At the same time, the most severe economic downturn in generations is forcing both broadcast stations and daily newspapers out of business. As a result of these two "perfect storms" colliding, we have lost some of those diverse media "voices" that we counted upon in the past to inform and educate our citizenry. I hope today's deregulatory action will help give AM broadcasters the relief they need to compete more effectively in this tumultuous marketplace.