**ALPINE BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

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Dear Radio World and Readers,

Question, why would honest and normally clear thinking FCC Chairman Ajit Pai, along with the other Commissioners, be poised to vote next week on new interference remediation rules which could lead to elimination of up to 90% of FM translators which they have proudly touted as being the crowning achievement of the AM Revitalization proceeding by virtue of having saved thousands of AM stations from extinction? Frankly, I pray that this is an honest oversight which can be remedied before they vote.

Having literally saved my small AM station from extinction, I have always worried that a lone radio enthusiast, using special antenna and receiver, could force my translator, serving thousands of listeners, off the air just to continue picking up a more distant signal for fun. The good news is that the proposed rules specifically prevent this. The bad news is that the present vague rules concerning interference are to be replaced with a new set of rules which decidedly stack the deck against FM translators.

My nightmare scenario is that 5 years or so from now when I’m ready to retire, some cutthroat competitor with deep pockets and under worked lawyers on retainer will entice a distant station, on the same or adjacent channel as my translator, to run ads seeking listeners who want to make a quick buck or get valuable station swag. All they have to do is fill out a simple complaint form online and let the station do the rest. A simple map showing that my translator might send out a weak signal to their far fringe listening area will be enough to prove interference exists. The only action I will be able to take then is to reduce power to a totally insignificant level or shutoff completely. Like most larger markets there are no alternative channels available to move to. Mercifully, the FCC has provided that execution will take place swiftly

Lest anyone think that this type of thing will not happen frequently, I submit my experience where a large broadcasting company filed informal complaints against my applications to modify translators. While admitting that no violation of rules was proposed, they opined that granting the applications would give me an unfair advantage. Their complaints cost me thousands of dollars in legal fees just to respond to. Ironically, after one application was ultimately granted I received a call asking if I would forgive them and sell the translator to them. Indeed. Once finished with working out the details of the largest recent merger, will their lawyers on staff once again go back to using their down time to reduce competition in any way possible? This scenario can and should be eliminated by placing a responsible time limit of a year or two after which no complaints of interference could be filed, unless triggered by a major modification of facilities.

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There are several other provisions of the proposed rules which I feel unfairly favour full-service stations over translators, such as defining the protected contour of a full-service station at the same weak level most others, notably Radio-Locater.com, define as fringe listening area. For months I was led to believe that only actual interference to full service stations in their primary service area would be cause for complaint. I feel betrayed. Also, that vetting of complainants and the completeness of the complaint will be relaxed to almost trivial standards. Having invested nearly a years worth of revenue in my translator, I really wanted to believe the Commission when they publicly stated they would try to protect my investment and preserve my stations’ voice.

I feel obligated to express my thanks to superstar communications attorney John Garziglia for publicly disclosing details, in his blog last week, about what the FCC really plans to be the new rules. I am disappointed that my state broadcasters’ association and the NAB apparently didn’t find this important enough to do the same.

Right now I am attempting to file my comments with the FCC but so far have been blocked because their computer system does not recognize my Zip code. Their help line can’t help me either, so I will have to pay my attorney to do so for me. My very survival is worth it. I urge every translator owner to file their own comments in MB Docket 18-119, contact the Commissioners directly, seek legislative relief and any thing else you can do to get the truth out. Perhaps enough of a groundswell will persuade the Commission to delay voting until fair and reasonable protection for translator owners is included.

Respectfully submitted April 30, 2019,

Pete Schartel, Owner KCXL AM & K275BQ