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July 2, 1998

Ms. Magalie Roman Salas
Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
191 M Street, NW, Room 222
Washington, DC 20554

Ex Parte Letter Re: Cases ¹FO 91-171; FO 91-301

Dear Secretary Salas:

Enclosed are two (2) copies of an ex parte presentation in the above-referenced proceeding.

Very truly yours,

Sharon Steffens, Supervisor

No. of Copies rec'd 0+3
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July 2, 1998

Chairman William Kennard
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street NW, Room 814
Washington, DC 20554

Ex Parte Filing in cases FO 91-171; FO 91-301

Dear Chairman Kennard:

Fifteen counties in the state of Michigan were declared disaster areas following a May 31, 1998, windstorm with winds up to 120 mph. Alpine Township suffered \$2,000,000 in non-agricultural damage and many more millions in agricultural damage. The local TV stations were very helpful in keeping those with electricity informed. Prior to the storm reaching us, there were several warnings and "crawls" on the bottom of TV sets alerting people of the potential danger. Based on this recent experience and past emergencies involving toxic spills, major fires and tornados, we strongly urge rejection of the proposed changes to the Emergency Alert System (EAS) rules. It would prevent the general population who are watching local TV stations on a cable system from receiving emergency announcements from local public safety authorities.

There is no basis for such a preemption of state and local public safety authorities, particularly when we oppose it and it goes against all common sense. Why wouldn't you want people to be aware of dangers and other critical information? All viewers of cable channels should get emergency announcements from their local public safety authority. Otherwise the public safety is harmed. So please reject the proposed change, including any proposal to preempt franchise provisions on local emergency alerts.

Municipalities have responsibility to protect the public safety. Trained public safety authorities are on duty 24 hours a day with an obligation and a duty to notify the public of emergencies. Where governments have felt it necessary (such as TV station announcements being inadequate or needing supplementing) municipalities require all channel local alert systems in their cable franchises. It is a violation of Federalism, common sense and your statutory duty to turn this vital public safety function over to a private party who has no obligation, training or authority on public safety matters.

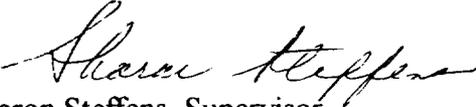
Broadcasters supporting the proposed rule claim that their emergency alerts are superior to those of state and local public safety authorities. This is a decision for each municipal safety authority to determine on a case by case basis, as reflected in their cable franchise. This decision cannot be turned over to a private party with no public safety obligation.

Alert systems deal with emergencies where public safety authorities have determined that the public needs to be informed immediately. The fact that emergency alerts from public safety authorities may occasionally overlap those of private parties (such as broadcasters) is a minor problem, if it is a problem at all. The NAB's proposed rule is unacceptable because it guarantees a substantial reduction in the number of people receiving emergency announcements from their local public safety authority.

Emergency information on TV stations can be helpful but typically apply mainly to weather. Local emergency alerts are also used for other types of emergencies, such as hazardous material spills, gas leaks, prison escapes, street and bridge closings and local snow emergencies. TV stations typically don't cover these. In part, this is because TV stations serve hundreds of communities. They don't cover local emergencies which affect only one community. Cable systems are often the best or only means for municipalities to alert their residents to local emergencies which reflect local conditions.

The Cable Act allows communities in renewals to require cable systems to meet community needs. Local emergency alert systems are a part of meeting such needs. Because they are protected by these provisions of the Cable Act you cannot preempt them. And any attempt at preemption would violate principles of Federalism and the U.S. Constitution due to public safety matters being of vital local concern.

Very truly yours,


Sharon Steffens, Supervisor