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DA 99-281

February 4, 1999

COMMISSION TO HOLD EN BANC HEARING ON FEBRUARY 12, 1999 REGARDING THE PENDING REVIEW OF THE COMMISSION'S LOCAL TELEVISION OWNERSHIP RULES

MM Docket Nos. 91-221 and 87-8

The Federal Communications Commission will hold an en banc hearing on Friday, February 12, 1999, from 9:30 a.m. to noon in the Commission meeting room, Room TW-C305 of the Commission's new headquarters building located at 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. The hearing will concern issues raised in connection with the Commission's pending review of its local television ownership rules.

The purpose of this en banc hearing is to educate and inform the Commissioners, FCC staff, and the public about differing perspectives on whether the Commission's local television ownership rules should be modified to respond to ongoing changes in the mass media industry. The Commission's pending proceeding on this issue is part of a larger examination of these and other broadcast media ownership rules first initiated by the Commission in 1991, and more recently guided by the statutory directives of the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

In its pending Local Ownership proceeding, the Commission has proposed modifying the "TV duopoly" rule, which prohibits the common ownership of more than one TV station in a local market, and the radio-television cross-ownership rule, which prohibits the common ownership of radio and TV stations in a local market. It has also sought comment on the appropriate grandfathering policy for TV local marketing agreements ("LMAs") that may become attributable under the Commission's proposed revisions of the rules which govern attribution of broadcast ownership interests.

The hearing will consist of presentations to the Commission by two panels. The first panel will be composed of legal scholars, economists, political scientists, and Wall Street observers. This panel will provide the Commission with a general perspective on the relevant trends in the mass media industry, the purposes for a free over-the-air broadcasting system, the future consequences of economic changes, and the role of the FCC in regulating broadcast ownership. The second panel will focus more specifically on the proposed rule modifications with perspectives from parties who have been actively involved in these issues. Although there are other ownership issues currently pending before the Commission, this hearing will focus solely on the issues raised by the "TV duopoly" and radio-television cross-ownership rules and the related TV LMA grandfathering policy.

The en banc is open to the public, and seating will be available on a first come, first served basis. A transcript of the en banc will be available 10 days after the event on the FCC's Internet site. The URL address for the FCC's Internet Home Page is <http://www.fcc.gov>.

The en banc will also be carried live on the Internet. Internet users may listen to the real-time audio feed of the en banc by accessing the FCC Internet Audio Broadcast Home Page. Step-by-step instructions on how to listen to the audio broadcast, as well as information regarding the equipment and software needed, are available on the FCC Audio Broadcast Home Page. The URL address for this home page is <http://www.fcc.gov/realaudio/.>

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