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Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

The Honorable Phil Gramm
United States Senate
370 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Gramm:

Thank you for your inquiry on behalf of your constituent, Carl D. Hamilton, Vice President/General Manager of Station KBXX-FM, Houston, Texas, regarding the Commission's proposal to create a low power FM (LPFM) radio service. Mr. Hamilton is concerned that low power FM stations would interfere with the signals of existing FM radio stations, such as KBXX-FM, and affect their ability to provide public service programming.

The Commission initiated its proceeding to consider whether to authorize low power radio broadcasting on January 28, 1999. In a *Notice of Proposed Rule Making*, the Commission proposed to authorize new 1000 watt and 100 watt radio stations, and sought comment on a proposal to create a third class of stations at power levels from 1-10 watts. In adopting the *Notice*, the Commission stated that its goals are to provide new opportunities for community-oriented radio broadcasting, to foster opportunities for new radio broadcast ownership, and to promote additional diversity in radio voices and program services.

Since adopting the *Notice*, the Commission has heard from thousands of people who want to use the airwaves to speak to their communities – college students, churches, community groups, elementary school principals, independent musicians, and minority groups. These citizens believe that the airwaves are a tremendous public resource, and the creation of a low power radio service could provide an effective way for more people to use this resource. Low power FM stations could provide a low-cost means of serving small towns and communities, as well as urban communities and neighborhoods.

The Commission has long recognized that local broadcasters provide vital services to their communities in the form of local news, weather, public affairs, and other programming in the public interest. In determining whether to create a low power radio service, the Commission is committed to protecting existing radio services and preserving the technical integrity of radio service currently available. The *Notice* proposes new technical rules and geographic spacing requirements to ensure that new LPFM stations would not cause interference to existing full power FM radio stations. The *Notice* tentatively concludes that

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LPFM stations authorized without third-adjacent channel protection requirements, and possibly without second-adjacent protection as well, would not pose a significant risk of interference to authorized radio service, a finding partially based on the Commission's experience with short-spaced full power stations. However, the Commission has asked commenters to address the likelihood and potential extent of any harmful effects on current stations and listeners, taking into account the size and location of the areas possibly affected and the interference immunity of the existing receiver population. We have also requested comment on the state of receiver technology and the ability of receivers to operate satisfactorily in the absence of second-adjacent channel protection. We will seriously consider studies and technical data submitted by commenters addressing these interference issues.

Based on its evaluation of the record created in this proceeding, the Commission will determine whether to authorize a low power radio service. Comments are due August 2, 1999, and reply comments are due September 1, 1999. The Commission will include Mr. Hamilton's letter in the record of the proceeding and evaluate all comments thoroughly.

Thank you for your interest in this matter.

Sincerely

Roy J. Stewart
Chief, Mass Media Bureau

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typed: 7/23/99