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Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Filing Online

RE: MM Docket No. 99-325

Dear Sir or Madam:

As an avid public radio listener and trustee of the NPR Foundation Board, I am writing in support of pending regulations which would facilitate creation of supplemental audio channels “either side” of the current FM channels.

As I understand this, the supplemental audio channel (SAC) is an application of HD (digital) radio. It is basically using new technology to “split” the current signal space into different side bars. It makes it possible to offer more than one channel of service to listeners on the same band. Listeners will be able to access the SAC by simply hitting a button on new digital receivers equipped with this function.

In my opinion, this is a huge opportunity for public good in that it will allow public radio stations to dramatically expand the range of services they can offer. For example, listeners in Minneapolis area might hear News and Information in English on KNOW 1 and the same stream of programming in Hmong or Spanish on KNOW 2 and 3--- simply with a touch of a button. Receivers with this feature will be introduced to the

marketplace this coming winter, and if you act now in approving this “split,” public radio stations could begin adding this kind of nation-building expansion of the current information stream fairly quickly. As we become increasingly multicultural in Minnesota, I can’t think of a technological innovation that could have more positive impact on what it means to be a good citizen. And you could multiply this leverage in several other cities where I have lived, for example Spanish and Creole in Tampa.

This is a potentially transformational technology, the likes of which radio hasn't seen since the introduction of the FM band. That's why your approval here is important. There will be hundreds of other applications of this technology, all of which you know better than I do. But to be creative for a moment:

- Smaller threads of the American music fabric will be able to find an audience. For example, one side band could serve the Native American population in our area, reducing the feelings of isolation and cultural abandonment that these citizens sometimes feel.
- Parents could have access to different levels of language and other elements of “common decency standards” when they are riding with their kids in the car. Favorite stations could run “family” versions of their current programming “next to” their current stations.
- Educational radio on side band radio could be simulcast with television, so that children who want to learn foreign languages in conjunction with popular television. For example, imaging Friends with a combination English/Chinese track, so that kids could hear what the language sounds like.

Allowing public radio stations to use supplemental audio channels with minimal regulatory constraints will have huge public benefits for the average citizen. I urge you to approve it.

Sincerely,

John Lilly
Trustee, NPR Foundation Board