1 MS. MERRITT: Do you mean do I understand?
2 COMMISSIONER ADELSTEIN: Well, you --
3 MS. MERRITT: I have not violated the law. I
4 understand it.
5 COMMISSIONER ADELSTEIN: Let me explain to you the
6 situation, that the law requires that if a station requires
7 payment for play of something on the radio, that that be
8 disclosed. Now, that's pretty much acceptable for that to
9 happen, but the station has to say brought to you by EMI
10 Records is such and such an artist.
11 Now, you mentioned this was a line item on your
12 statement as if they were charging you directly, and I'm
13 just wondering if you're suggesting that payola is keeping
14 local artists like yourself off of the radio.
15 MS. MERRITT: Well, there's a system in place and
16 it's absolutely naive to think that pay for play doesn't go
17 on. There are elaborate ways of independent promotion, that
18 this completely happens. I'd like to cite an **Observer**
19 article from Saturday, October 18th, about country radio.
20 And it says: "but Logan, the first subject in
21 this, acknowledged that many veteran acts, veteran musical
22 acts, now record for small independent labels that don't
23 have a lot of promotional muscle."
24 I'll ask you, what do you think promotional muscle
25 is? I think it's money; right? I mean, maybe you should

1 call these guys and ask them too, but there is certainly a
2 system in place. You know, I've heard of people getting a
3 bill from a radio station when they were played.
4 COMMISSIONER ADELSTEIN: That's something that
5 deserves further investigation. Certainly I'll follow up
6 this question to you, Joan Siefert Rose.
7 You said that Tift Merritt could be heard on WUNC.
8 Do you think that has anything to do with the fact that
9 you're a non-commercial station so obviously payola doesn't
10 enter the picture? I mean, does that possibly have to do
11 with any evidence of this kind of activity in the radio
12 business?
13 MS. ROSE: You know, I really can't speak on
14 behalf of commercial broadcasters here. I only know that
15 our policies are to give exposure to local artists. This is
16 part of our mandate as a non-commercial station.
17 And one of the programs that we have on the
18 weekend really focuses on traditional music and bluegrass
19 music and country music for the area. So Tift is a very
20 logical artist for us to play, very popular with our
21 listeners. So in our case we really are motivated to
22 provide talent and recordings that we think would be
23 something that our listeners would like to hear, and that's
24 about as simple as it gets.
25 CHAIRMAN POWELL: I'd like to read a couple

1 questions here. I'd like to read two of them and then maybe
2 we'll go into the open mike session and continue the
3 discussion.
4 The first is for Mr. Keelor. It's in reference to
5 free time for candidates during debates and candidate
6 interviews.
7 "Isn't it a legal requirement for licensing in
8 exchange for use of the public airwaves? What measures do
9 you take to ensure fair and equal airtime for all
10 candidates, and does that include third-party candidates?"
11 MR. KEELOR: It does, sir. All of the Liberty
12 stations during the last mayoral elections offered
13 candidates free time in various formats other than
14 newscasts. A five, three-minute, two-minute segment where
15 they could come in and tape any statement they wanted to
16 make and it would be carried in various day parts; some in
17 prime, some late night, some early and so forth. So we made
18 that effort.
19 We've also opened up, and we were disappointed by
20 the candidates' response to our offer of a free internet
21 platform. We asked them to put their campaign positions,
22 their bios and so forth on our websites. And because our
23 stations are, for the most part, I think 13 of 15 are number
24 one stations, we drive a lot of viewers to our websites. And
25 we were disappointed that only one or two took advantage of

1 that.

2 I think my point here is we have multiple
3 platforms now to make candidates available. If we can get
4 digital up and running and can multicast, I see a huge
5 opportunity for us to provide more airtime to candidates
6 using the digital spectrum, and I think that's in our
7 company's game plan.

8 So free time is something we do routinely. We
9 certainly provide a lot of coverage during our newscasts.
10 We have done live debates which have been picked up by
11 national networks and we have offered our website. So we're
12 trying to give them multiple platforms. We do not always
13 get the cooperation of the candidates that we would like to
14 get.

15 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Thank you. A second question
16 which I think is interesting: :"Will calls for more public
17 service from broadcast stations be used as an excuse to
18 punish smaller stations not affiliated with large
19 corporations?

20 For example, a small and independent station has a
21 much harder time maintaining profits than a corporate
22 affiliated station that can afford to run at a loss by
23 borrowing profits from other partner stations. For that
24 reason corporate stations must be held to a higher
25 standard."

1 What I think is interesting in the question is the
2 suggestion that if there were government mandates for public
3 interest obligations, should they be in some ways graduated,
4 given the nature of the station; that a smaller station
5 under perhaps greater financial difficulty would have fewer
6 public interest obligations.
7 MR. KEELOR: What I was alluding to before in the
8 smaller markets is that to provide good service, you must
9 have the resources to do so. And the fifth station, the WB
10 station in Sioux City, Iowa may not have those resources.
11 I think public interest standards in some degree
12 are acceptable. I don't object to them philosophically.
13 What I have always objected to them is the basis that they
14 are terrible administrative burdens, and that we spend so
15 much time administering what the government wants done that
16 we could be devoting to serving the public. That's been my
17 concern with going back to the Fairness Doctrine and various
18 other things.
19 But to answer specifically, I think they need to
20 be applied uniformly if you're going to have them. I
21 question to what degree you need them. The Commission
22 obviously in the past several years has believed we do not.
23 CHAIRMAN POWELL: The next question, -- and we'll
24 take a few minutes to get through more of these before we go
25 to open mic since they are also from the audience.

1 The question here, to discuss the personal attack
2 regulations: "If a radio station broadcasts a personal
3 attack on a non-public figure, is the station required to
4 provide a copy of the attack to the individual? What are
5 the penalties for not following the personal attack
6 regulation?"
7 I believe I can answer this question. The
8 Commission had personal attack rules which were ultimately
9 struck down in court and don't currently exist in the
10 Commission rules as a consequence of a case called RTNDA
11 (phonetic), if I recall correctly, so regrettably we don't
12 have rules that we're capable of enforcing in that area at
13 the moment.
14 In order to criticize the Chair, I should ask this
15 question. "Why are the questions from the audience being
16 filtered by the staff members before they get to the
17 Commissioners?"
18 (Laughter.)
19 CHAIRMAN POWELL: I don't know. I hope they're
20 not. We'll do the best we can to get to all the questions
21 fairly, and you'll be provided with open mic time and nobody
22 will be filtering through the microphone. So if we are, I
23 apologize for that.
24 A question for our broadcast owners: "What
25 efforts do you take to try to inform your employees about a

1 station's -- from the station's perspective about guidelines
2 for airing local artists? Do you have some outlines or
3 training for employees to help with this?"
4 MS. KWEI: Yes, we do. And I have to tell you,
5 over the last several months or the last, really, last year
6 it's gotten a lot better where we have a -- we have some
7 standards set in place where weekly our program directors
8 and our music directors are instructed by myself, the
9 general manager, and it comes from the headquarters, that we
10 have to allow access for local artists and independent
11 labels to pitch their product, quite frankly. We do that on
12 a weekly basis.
13 Often times it may be a face-to-face meeting or it
14 may be a phone conversation, but we have put those measures
15 in place over the last several months in an effort, once
16 again, to do better.
17 We have a program, as I mentioned in my opening
18 statement, on Sunday evenings called Heat From the Street,
19 and it is hosted by some young local people, and the primary
20 goal of that program a lot like the bluegrass program, is to
21 provide a platform for local artists to be heard.
22 We listen for what the public wants, and often
23 times -- and I did mention this one artist named Sherica, --
24 we will hear a lot of rave reviews from some particular
25 artist that will end up getting play on our radio station.

1 Or in our cases we have invited a lot of our local artists
2 who have risen to that point to perform at some of our
3 events.
4 So those are some of the efforts that we have
5 instituted to make sure that we're doing the best that we
6 can, and again on a day-to-day basis trying to get better.
7 CHAIRMAN POWELL: "What ideas do any of you have
8 as broadcasters to make local coverage of local political
9 campaigns a lot more interesting?
10 From my perspective, simply airing debates isn't
11 enough, and ads often turn voters off. Can anyone be more
12 creative?" Good luck with that one.
13 (Laughter.)
14 MR. KEELOR: Sometimes we're the victims of the
15 subject matter we have to cover.
16 (Applause.)
17 Ironically, because we are not a newspaper and you
18 cannot print another page, we have a finite amount of
19 airtime and a finite amount of commercial time. And it is
20 true in our stations' cases that we are not able to devote
21 as much time to maybe to the agricultural secretary race or
22 something like that, that we do the county commission, city
23 council and so forth. I think we have to prioritize and I
24 think the public understands that.
25 But the invitation that we made for free time went

1 out to all candidates and the internet offer went out to all
2 candidates. So that's when we were really disappointed that
3 we really didn't get access to that because I think it's our
4 obligation to provide access and to provide the platform,
5 but I don't see any way we can make the candidates come or
6 make the people see it.
7 MS. ROSE: In our case we do have some long form
8 interview programs also where candidates have a chance to
9 talk at length about their platforms and interests. We tend
10 to focus on larger races, senate races, statewide races or
11 congressional races as opposed to township races. But that
12 opportunity is there, particularly when a race is heated.
13 CHAIRMAN POWELL: To Ms. Merritt, there's a
14 question for you. "What other means can be used to keep the
15 airwaves free other than having to rely on commercial
16 advertising?"
17 MS. MERRITT: Well, commercial advertising, do you
18 mean air play?
19 CHAIRMAN POWELL: I don't know.
20 MS. MERRITT: It's kind of the same thing, isn't
21 it?
22 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Well, if I can elaborate.
23 MS. MERRITT: Please do.
24 CHAIRMAN POWELL: I'm reading the mind of someone,
25 but I think the suggestion is one thing that we keep in mind

1 is that in our system of broadcasting, the government
2 doesn't fund or subsidize the media at all.
3 In a lot of countries, like Commissioner Adelstein
4 mentioned, in England, the government deals with a lot of
5 the concerns we're raising by having a government-sponsored
6 medium, the BBC. Citizens are taxed roughly $150 per year,
7 regardless if they're watching in order to subsidize the
8 cost of that programming.
9 And we certainly have public broadcasting in the
10 United States, so the commercial motives of advertising are
11 absolutely essential to the survival of stations in our
12 system. So I guess maybe someone's reacting to your point
13 about advertising and being all they care about.
14 MR. KEELOR: Mr. Chairman, --
15 MS. MERRITT: Well, it's my turn.
16 MR. KEELOR: Go ahead.
17 MS. MERRITT: I, you know, I really am just taking
18 what the Clear Channel president said, so I'm not changing
19 his words and, you know, I think that my impression was I'm
20 very confused about what the question was.
21 Are there other means for me besides the radio?
22 Yes, there certainly are. And if you'll read my bio, I
23 think you'll see that I have used them very well. I tour
24 all around the country and in Europe, and I get a lot of
25 exposure in magazines.

1 Unfortunately it's very difficult to even break
2 even as a musician, and there is no contesting that the
3 radio is the main source that people turn to when they want
4 to hear a song. And so as a musician and my colleagues who
5 are musicians and artists, to have access to that medium
6 defiltered for the majority in this country through two or
7 three large companies really means that our chances are
8 very, very slim.
9 And, you know, I agree with you, Commissioner,
10 that I'm very proud that the government does not get
11 involved with radio in this country, that the media is run
12 on its own, that it's not a government media.
13 But by the same hand, these companies are really
14 being allowed to go -- they are given -- right now they have
15 protection because they can become as large as they want and
16 they can be concerned with their bottom line, when really
17 what the FCC in my opinion, humble opinion, is about is
18 protecting the airwaves and the people and not these larger
19 companies and their interest in profit. And, you know, I
20 think it's great that they're doing well, but their job is
21 content.
22 CHAIRMAN POWELL: I'm going to ask two more
23 questions and then we're going to start with the open mic
24 session.
25 Without public service, specific public service

1 performance standards, how do you as broadcasters know how
2 to meet and exceed community expectations?
3 MS. KWEI: Well, in our situation there may not be
4 particular guidelines, but quite frankly our company sets
5 their own guidelines and what our expectations are on a
6 local level. Radio One expects us to provide a certain
7 amount of public service airtime for local organizations,
8 organizations, events, fundraising and things of that
9 nature.
10 We also, as part of our marketing and promotions
11 department, and I would say this is probably station by
12 station, we reach out to local organizations monthly and
13 annually trying to find opportunities in which we can help
14 them get the word out about their particular event, in some
15 cases partner up with them and make their event even larger
16 than what it might have not been had it not been for Radio
17 One's involvement.
18 So again, just in our isolated situation we're
19 told, quite frankly, what the expectation is. And it's up
20 to me as the general manager to make sure on a day-to-day
21 basis that we're delivering that expectation.
22 CHAIRMAN POWELL: And finally we're asked this
23 question, because I want to take a chance and answer it.
24 "Local ownership has lost control and diversity. We need
25 efforts there to ensure minority ownership and more

1 programming diversity. What could we do?"
2 I wanted to use that question to take an
3 opportunity to talk about the FCC recently launched a
4 diversity task force, or what we call a federal advisory
5 committee, that is focused intensely on the question of
6 minority and female roles in the media and the
7 communications industry at large.
8 It's composed by leading citizens throughout the
9 country who are dedicated to a successful commitment to
10 diversity. They had their first meeting and are actively
11 working on policies and recommendations to the Commission
12 and the government that we can follow consistent with the
13 legal restraints to promote diversity.
14 And I know that Congressman Watt mentioned the
15 importance of that, and I want to invite his participation
16 in that and let you all know that and answer that question.
17 So with that, Madam Secretary, why don't you
18 announce for us the procedures for the open mic and we'll
19 proceed to that section?
20 SECRETARY DORTCH: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
21 Members of the audience who wish to speak should line up at
22 the nearest lectern. We will alternate lecterns during the
23 session. If you are in the overflow rooms and wish to
24 speak, please come to the meeting chamber and we will
25 accommodate as many as the fire marshall permits. A staff

1 member at each lectern will let you know when it is your
2 turn to speak.
3 In the interest of letting as many people present
4 their views as possible, speakers should limit their remarks
5 to no more than two minutes. The green light will signal
6 for the first one and a half minutes. When the yellow light
7 signals, you will have thirty seconds to sum up your
8 remarks.
9 Please try to observe these minutes. We also ask
10 that you turn off your cell phones. Thank you.
11 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Yes, sir.
12 MR. RASH: Mr. Chairman, my name is Dennis Rash.
13 I am chairman of the North Carolina Bicycle Committee, and
14 if I may add a word of welcome to Charlotte and North
15 Carolina.
16 The North Carolina Bicycle Committee was created
17 by the North Carolina General Assembly to assist local
18 governments in developing policies and standards for
19 planning and maintaining and operating bikeways safely
20 across North Carolina. We're advisory to the Secretary of
21 the Department of Transportation and to the Board of
22 Transportation in furtherance of this policy.
23 North Carolina has the second largest state
24 maintained road system in the United States. We are
25 specifically charged with representing the interests of

1 bicyclists on all matters concerning bicycles and a safer
2 environment for bicycling in North Carolina. And it is that
3 safer environment that I wish to speak to.
4 Here is a case study of localism gone amuck. On
5 September 22 and 23, Clear Channel Communications Raleigh
6 affiliate, G-105, during morning drive time, aired an
7 extended discussion about how much fun it was for the
8 motoring public to run cyclists off the highways.
9 From the E-mails and the listener comments I've
10 received, I understand the G-105 announcers provoked and
11 baited their call-in public to explore ways motorists could
12 arrest cyclists. Several ways suggested was shooting pellet
13 guns, and throwing empty bottles at passing vehicles.
14 One of the announcers opined that he would enjoy driving his
15 bicycle on a pathway.
16 North Carolina law specifically classifies
17 bicycles as vehicles and regulates their lawful use. So the
18 announcer was dead wrong on that. As a matter of common
19 courtesy and safety, he was beyond wrong. He was
20 provocative and callous.
21 And I got an E-mail from a Chapel Hill cyclist
22 about how a pickup several days after that had intentionally
23 crossed the center line and run him off.
24 Here is an example of where the FCC, if it chooses
25 to expand consolidation, must seek additional regulation for

1 the safety of the public.

2 I have an extended statement that I will give the

3 Secretary, but we hope very much that you will take this

4 into consideration in your rulemaking.

5 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Thank you. Just for the record,

6 we did receive complaints about that at the very end of

7 September and our enforcement bureau will be looking into

8 that matter, so thank you for bringing it to our attention.

9 MS. O'DANIEL: My name is MaryLee O'Daniel. I'm

10 here to voice my frustration as a member of a minority that

11 is largely disserved by the television industry. That

12 minority is the blind. I know that we have had the

13 wonderful service of closed-captioning for many years and

14 it's wonderful.

15 There has also been available audio description,

16 but I only know of two places where I can access programming

17 with audio description. One of those is on public

18 television, the television system that can least afford to

19 do so, and the other one is one movie a week on a cable

20 movie station.

21 I'm well aware that there has been a lobby in

22 recent times to require television networks to provide

23 approximately four hours a week of audio described

24 programming for the blind, but we need to have some common

25 sense about that.

1 It would be lots of fun to have my favorite
2 programs, The District and Whoopi audioscribed, but it would
3 take away a lot of the fun of listening to Whoopi if I hear
4 that beep, beep, beep and knew that the severe weather
5 warnings were being scrolled across the screen and I would
6 have no idea what they were.
7 I appreciate talking with you, and I also would
8 like to say that a lot of our stations have done a good job
9 of giving public service announcements and repeating the
10 telephone numbers, but when they tell me on the radio or the
11 television to call 1-800-POWER-ONE when my power is out,
12 which number is the letter P? Is it six or seven? And
13 which number is the letter W? Is it nine or zero?
14 We do need audio description for the important
15 public service announcements and the severe weather
16 warnings. Thank you very much.
17 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Thank you. I would add too
18 that's something we would urge Congress to help us with.
19 The Commission did once have audio description, but was also
20 struck down in the court. So we're looking to Congress to
21 hopefully put that back.
22 Yes, sir.
23 MR. JOHNSON: Mr. Chairman, I also would like to
24 welcome you to Charlotte. I appreciate personally the
25 efforts that the Commission has made to come here to listen

1 to the public about certain statements.
2 My name is Harry Johnson. I am also a bicyclist
3 and I'm going to be a little more succinct than Mr. Rash. I
4 agree with him completely.
5 I'm incredulous, absolutely incredulous, that
6 these two clowns on the morning drive time are still
7 employed by the station. It's unbelievable to me.
8 Promoting bodily harm to the general public live, on the
9 air, is beyond reason.
10 Contrary to what Clear Channel's website said, and
11 you can go on it very clearly and it says what kind of
12 community support they're involving themselves with, it is a
13 concern that Clear Channel appears to be promoting a pattern
14 of community abuse for the sake of rating points.
15 Bigger is not better. Bigger insulates
16 management, station management. Bigger insulates profits.
17 Bigger insulates ownerships from responsiveness and
18 responsibilities to the community to which it purportedly
19 serves. Thank you.
20 MR. NEWMAN: Hello. My name is Gray Newman and I
21 was elected this past November to that most local of
22 offices, to the Mecklenburg Soil and Water Conservation
23 Board. We're all the way at the bottom of the ballot, so
24 just keep on going.
25 I want to address my comments to Mr. Keelor. I

1 think it's wonderful that you all do offer free advertising
2 or free announcements, free airtime for candidates and local
3 candidates. If that was available here in Charlotte, nobody
4 bothered telling us about it.
5 My entire budget for my campaign was $700, and I
6 was the big spender. I got over 36,000 votes. That's less
7 than two cents a vote. And if something like free web space
8 or free airtime had been available, I think that would have
9 been wonderful.
10 And I would urge the radio stations and the TV
11 stations in our market to talk to Mr. Keelor and get some of
12 his ideas on this. Thank you.
13 MR. SMITH: Mr. Chairman, I'm here on behalf of
14 two fantastic radio stations in the State of South Carolina.
15 My name is William E. Smith. I am the executive director
16 of the Shrine Bowl of the Carolinas. Our job is to raise
17 money for our Shriner's hospitals for children.
18 These two gentlemen and these two radio stations
19 and their personnel have been absolutely magnificent, and
20 this is why I'm here because they do something for the
21 community. Not just for Rock Hill and Fort Mill, South
22 Carolina, but for the two Carolinas.
23 Through their efforts they have worked and
24 generated a radio network for the Shrine Bowl of the
25 Carolinas which raises money for the burn and crippled

1 children's hospital to exceed 60 stations in the two
2 Carolinas; four and a half hours of broadcast time. So I
3 have nothing but wonderful praise for these men and their
4 efforts. Thank you, sir.
5 MR. McCONNELL: Good evening. My name is David
6 McConnell. I drove down here from Asheville, North
7 Carolina. I'm an independent media developer, but I've been
8 working for the past couple of years with the Asheville Area
9 Chamber of Commerce and regional economic developers in
10 western North Carolina.
11 We've been losing manufacturing jobs at a break
12 neck speed. We've done a lot of research to determine that
13 the media can be a pretty major economic driver for our
14 area. Unfortunately what we've discovered is that's there's
15 an extreme lack of media infrastructure. We don't have
16 public access stations. We're finally getting some low
17 power FM licenses.
18 We've been doing lots of interviews with our best
19 and brightest graduates from the area. They're all leaving
20 for larger markets. A lot of this is due to the fact that
21 the majority of our stations, both television and radio,
22 have been brought up by Sinclair, by Clear Channel, by
23 others.
24 They're becoming increasingly automated; they're
25 doing less and less local coverage, and it's a serious

1 concern in our area because we don't have a lot of resources
2 and we're trying to find something to really help the
3 region.
4 So, what do we do? We've talked to people
5 endlessly in lots and lots of sessions, and we've come to a
6 few conclusions, like, how do we increase localism? We have
7 to increase community involvement in the media. We've got
8 to increase real community news coverage, not just the
9 leading and bleeding stuff. We've got to increase resources
10 for aspiring media developers. We have to provide real-
11 world experience for these people.
12 How do we foster local commercial development,
13 which I think is one of the functions of the FCC. We have
14 to create a local media infrastructure and ensure local
15 representation, ensure local control, and guarantee
16 opportunities for local ownership for media entrepreneurs.
17 So specifically what I would like to see the FCC
18 do, there have been a few steps lately that have been really
19 good, I would like to see further expansion of the low-power
20 FM programs so that we could get more than just a hundred
21 watts. We're starting one up now; maybe we get five miles.
22 We're trying to go regional; we're in a small rural
23 community.
24 We really need to see more licenses, we need to
25 see more power. We need to increase the number of LPFM

1 licenses. We need to increase cable franchise requirements
2 so that we can start to really implement some pretty serious
3 community media infrastructures both on-line and television
4 who need to reinforce localism. And we need to not weaken
5 the current ownership rules. Thanks.
6 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Thank you.
7 MS. COLE: Good evening. My name is Marja Cole.
8 I'm the executive director of the American Red Cross in
9 North and South Carolina. In Winston-Salem, the coverage we
10 get from our local broadcasting stations is, as my daughter
11 would say, awesome.
12 We have two TV stations, we have WTV, WTWV-20 and
13 WXII, Channel 12. We have six radio stations that we work
14 with, WSJS, Kiss-94, WBFJ, Joy-FM, the Light, 1340, and
15 WTQR. All these radio and TV stations represent all
16 different audiences, all kinds of music, all kinds of
17 formats and so forth; they all help us do so many amazing
18 things in our community.
19 They respond to eleven special event blood drives
20 and one CPR day that we do every year that enables people to
21 come and learn CPR and first aid at no cost. They also, of
22 course, provide coverage for all the disasters, both
23 nationally and locally that we cover.
24 And soon WXII is going to sponsor a telethon for
25 us to help us raise money for nine chapters in the State of

1 North Carolina, not just ours. And during Hurricane Floyd
2 Channel 12, WXII, helped us raise almost two million dollars
3 for relief for this effort.
4 They also sponsor our Twelve Days of Christmas
5 program and many others drives. Together these broadcasters
6 have collected last year alone 2,079 units of blood which
7 ended up helping more than 6200 people in our community.
8 We've had a partnership with our broadcasting
9 group in Winston-Salem for more than thirty years. Without
10 them we could not do our business. I feel like I'm
11 representing all the other organizations in Winston-Salem
12 because they do this for everybody, and across the state all
13 the broadcasters help the Red Crosses do their work.
14 Without them there would not be the work that we do, and I
15 thank them all.
16 CHAIRMAN POWELL: Yes, sir.
17 MR. BROWN: I'm Sam Brown from Charlotte. I
18 represent the Common Cause of North Carolina. We've got
19 about 2500 members living in North Carolina.
20 Common Cause believes that the dissemination of
21 information, free and fair, is a necessity for democracy to
22 work. So owning media is not just a business, it's a public
23 responsibility, indeed it is a trust. Profit must not be
24 the dictating force for policy in the media.
25 One of the serious mistakes the Federal Government

1 made was during the last couple years giving away TV
2 frequencies that were done under the radar because the media
3 did not inform the public the way it should have. That's an
4 example of what the media can do against the public good.
5 Just as strict government control turns out
6 propaganda and silences dissenting voices, monopoly
7 ownership would have its ill effects in the media.
8 The increased size that was recently granted by
9 the FCC moves the media toward monopolistic ownership and
10 fewer and fewer CEOs making decisions about who gets heard
11 on local stations and who gets silenced, and what issues are
12 ignored or covered.
13 Common Cause is in favor of democracy. We're in
14 favor of things being done that promote the people's
15 interest, and with regard to the FCC as an agency of the
16 people, not a manager for big business to take over greater
17 and greater segments of the media market. We just wanted to
18 express that concern.
19 Incidentally, it has occurred to me that this has
20 the appearance of a PR effort to recover self-respect for
21 the FCC after having ignored the public outcry against the
22 increasing percentage of the media market that can be owned
23 by fewer and fewer owners. Thank you very much.
24 CHAIRMAN POWELL: I'll only say we'll work to
25 prove you otherwise.

1 MS. WALKER: Good evening. I'm Kathy Walker and I
2 have an advertising agency in Greensboro, North Carolina.
3 And I have a great pleasure to say that a lot of my issues
4 have already been covered, but I want to get really get out
5 there and say maybe we should consider a ban on paid
6 political advertising and talk about free, but limited and
7 equal airtime for political candidates and their campaigns.
8 (Applause.)
9 That is desperately needed to serve the American
10 people's interest, and I'd like to quote Walter Cronkite
11 while I'm here.
12 There is no more important challenge facing our
13 democracy than to free our political system from the choke
14 hold of money and special interest. Candidates should not
15 have to put themselves on the auction block to raise the
16 resources needed to communicate in the modern era. Our
17 politics should be driven by ideas, and not money.
18 Broadcasters have become the leading cause of the
19 high cost of modern politics. Broadcasters have been given
20 billions of dollars worth of exclusive licenses, free of
21 charge, to use our scarce public airwaves, but only on the
22 condition that they serve the public interest. The best way
23 for this great medium to discharge its responsibility under
24 the law is by providing free airtime before elections so
25 that without having to raise money with special interests