

STEVE SOUTHERLAND, II
2ND DISTRICT, FLORIDA

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Congress of the United States
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Received & Inspected

JUN 02 2014

May 29, 2014

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FCC Mail Room
Mr. Tom Wheeler
Chairman, Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

This letter is intended to convey my support for the Black Television News Channel (BTNC) in its application for approval before the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). It is my understanding that this important initiative represents the first 24-hour cable news channel dedicated to issues affecting African American communities, offering significant social and economic benefits to North Florida and the nation at large.

I understand that BTNC would present news, information, and educational content through a multi-platform approach that utilizes traditional linear cable and satellite service for television viewing, while also introducing interactive social media and e-commerce features.

Programming through the BTNC would provide access to information and educational programming to meet the specific needs of a growing and dynamic population. The network will shed light on the unique social, economic, and political challenges facing many of our minority communities and will seek to build a bridge to provide a better understanding between our nation's diverse cultures.

BTNC has partnered with the nation's Historically Black Colleges & Universities (HBCUs) to provide the network access to facilities, content, and subject matter expertise, as well as access to a rich and diverse pool of academic experts, authors and specialists who have agreed to serve as nightly on-air contributing analysts.

It is my understanding that BTNC seeks approval from the Federal Communications Commission to temporarily occupy the Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) Public Interest Space. I support this project and recognize its potential ability to create jobs, promote economic growth, and generate a heightened sense of social awareness. For your information, I have attached additional materials and I urge a favorable decision by the FCC on behalf of the BTNC to occupy the DBS Public Internet Space. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Steve Southerland, II
Member of Congress



For additional information, please contact:

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BLACK TELEVISION NEWS CHANNEL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Despite the proliferation of basic and premium cable television channels during the past two decades, *the number of cable news networks dedicated to serving the nation's African American communities remains at ZERO!* And, for the first time since the civil-rights movement, Americans entered this New Year with no Black-owned and operated full-power TV stations. Black Television News Channel will be the nation's first channel to fill this significant void and provide African America viewers news, information, and educational content focused on their interests and needs, while tapping into subscription television's most loyal consumer.

BTNC will employ a multi-platform approach that utilizes traditional linear cable and satellite service for television viewing while also introducing interactive, enhanced television services and e-commerce features. BTNC will locate its domestic and international network operations center (NOC) on the campus of Florida A & M University, a Historically Black College & University (HBCU) to provide the network access to facilities, content, and subject matter expertise, as well as access to a rich and diverse pool of academic experts, authors and specialists who have agreed to serve as nightly on-air contributing analysts.

The Center for Economic Forecasting and Analysis at Florida State University conducted an in-depth study on the economic impact that BTNC will have on Florida A&M University's campus and host community. The study determined that BTNC would generate \$33.6 million in economic stimulus each year for its host city. BTNC will also create 109 new jobs in Tallahassee, paying 150% greater than the Capital cities' average MSA.

BTNC founding co-managers are JC Watts, Jr. (a former congressman) and Robert Brillante (a 30-year cable TV veteran and founder of Florida's News Channel). The co-managers have invested more than \$4 million, to date, and have successfully accomplished the following four objectives: 1) polled audience demand; 2) conducted 18 months of LIVE on-air programming trials; 3) built valuable content and advertising partnerships; and 4) helped steer our nation's public and private sector policy to promote a diversity of voices in cable TV programming.

BTNC represents a collaborative effort of broadcast veterans, policymakers, journalists, community leaders, educators, advertising executives, and content providers. The network has partnered with SONY to equip and integrate its network operation center (NOC), studio facilities, teleport, mobile ENG infrastructure, and automated newsroom. VIZ RT will provide BTNC its advanced virtual reality television production assets. BTNC is also partnered with WorldLink Ventures, a global leader in multi-platform sales, to broker the network's remnant advertising inventory.

The cornerstone of BTNC's business case includes the following facts about its targeted audience:

- African Americans are extremely loyal to programming and merchant promotions that speak to them. All of the top 10 rated shows among African Americans feature black cast members.
- African Americans are dissatisfied with the negative imagery and stereotyping perpetuated by mainstream media news outlets today.
- African Americans—more than any other culture—depend on subscription television to stay informed.
- African Americans, despite being subscription television's most voracious consumers, are currently underserved by cable TV and satellite television programming options.
- In 2013, African Americans watched 37% more TV, ordered more pay-TV and VOD services, and owned more HDTV sets than any other segment of the US population.
- Today, 43 million African Americans live in the US and the black population is growing 40 percent faster than the general population.

Nielsen's 2013 report on African American consumers revealed the following:

- 91% of African Americans *"believe that Black (owned and produced) media is more relevant to them."*
- 81% believe that *"products advertised on Black media are more relevant to them."*
- 77% feel that *"Black media has a better understanding of the needs and issues that affect them."*
- 73% believe that *"Black media keeps them in touch with their heritage."*

The mission of Black Television News Channel is to produce intelligent programming that is informative, educational, inspiring, and empowering for distribution to the network's African American audience.



OFFICE OF
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON

July 23, 2014

The Honorable Steve Southerland II
U.S. House of Representatives
1129 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Southerland:

Thank you for your recent letter regarding the Black Television News Channel's ("BTNC") waiver request. Your views will be taken into consideration and your letter will be entered into the record for this proceeding.

As you are aware, Congress has imposed certain requirements on Direct Broadcast Satellite (DBS) carriers, including the requirement to reserve a percentage of channel capacity for noncommercial educational or informational programming. Commission rules currently require four percent of a DBS carrier's channel capacity to be reserved exclusively for noncommercial programming of an educational or informational nature.

BTNC recently filed a request for a three-year waiver from this requirement. On May 15, 2014, the Media Bureau released a Public Notice requesting comments on BTNC's waiver request. The comment periods have closed, and the Media Bureau has started its review of the record developed.

I hope this information is helpful, and I appreciate your interest in this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tom Wheeler", written over a horizontal line.

Tom Wheeler