

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2008

The Honorable Kevin J. Martin
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.
Washington, DC 20554

RE: Report on Broadcast Localism and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking,
MB Docket No. 04-233

Dear Chairman Martin:

Broadcasters are public trustees, and one of their core functions is to convey local information to their viewers and listeners. We are writing to express our belief that the current FCC localism rules are superior to many of the new obligations proposed by the FCC's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) in January. We urge you to resist a regulatory regime that would needlessly burden responsible broadcasters and possibly impede their ability to provide quality local programming.

The Commission's rules currently require broadcasters to provide reasonable access and equal opportunities to political candidates. We are concerned, however, with proposed rules forcing broadcasters to categorize and sub-categorize public affairs programming. Such a rule would focus more on checking boxes with the Commission than meeting local needs and divert resources from the creation of local programming. For concerns with specific broadcaster's public affairs programming, we suggest a case-by-case approach rather than a one-size fits all straight-jacket.

Other issues in the NPRM also raise similar concerns, such as the potentially onerous new procedural requirements for disclosure. Existing rules require broadcasters to maintain a public file documenting their operations and make it available to anyone in the community for review. In addition, we are skeptical of new procedural requirements prescribing how broadcasters must interact with their local audience. Successful broadcasters compete fiercely for their audience, a dynamic which is much more likely to produce responsive programming than regulations that would displace that competition.

Thank you for your consideration of our views as part of the Commission's ongoing proceedings on localism.

Sincerely,


Gene Green
Member of Congress


Charles Gonzalez
Member of Congress