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Federal Communications Commission
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 2, 2000

Press Statement of Commissioner Gloria Tristani

Re: Application for Radio License Transfers in Bloomington, Illinois from Bloomington Broadcast Holdings, Inc. to Citadel Communications Corp.

The Mass Media Bureau has granted a license transfer of WBNQ(FM), WBWN(FM) and WJBC(AM) that will permit one entity to control a staggering 90.5% of the market revenue in Bloomington, Illinois. I have serious doubts that this level of concentration of the public airwaves is in the public interest.

The Bureau's rationale for its action relies on the fact that this case involves the transfer of an existing station combination from one entity (Bloomington Broadcast Holdings, Inc.) to another (Citadel Communications Corp.). In the Bureau's view, because such a transfer does not change the competitive landscape in Bloomington, there is no basis on which the Commission could deny the license transfer.

The Bureau asks the wrong question. Under the Section 310(d) of the Communications Act, the issue is not whether a license transfer would change the competitive landscape, but whether a license transfer is in the *public interest*. While a public interest inquiry includes a competitive analysis, it also includes other vital considerations like the diversity of voices available to the listening public. Here, the Bureau has approved a license transfer that will give one entity control over three of five commercial stations in the Bloomington Arbitron market (representing, as noted above, over 90% of the revenues).¹ While other stations' signals may reach Bloomington, there are no other stations obligated to serve the specific needs of Bloomington residents. We license radio stations to specific communities, not to states or regions, because we believe that local stations will best meet local needs. Those needs are not well-served where the public airwaves are controlled by a single speaker.

¹ Of course, under Section 202 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, one entity cannot own three of five radio stations in a market. See *Sec. 202(b)(1)(D)* (in markets with 14 or fewer radio stations, a single entity may own up to five commercial stations, but not more than 50% of the stations in the market). Thus, the only way this transaction can be granted is by applying the Commission's contour-overlap method of counting the stations in the market. Under that approach, the applicant asserts that there are 19 stations in the Bloomington market, rather than the 5 counted by Arbitron. Since a single entity can own up to 6 stations in a 19-station market, applying the Commission's market definition means that a single entity could own *every station* licensed to the Bloomington Arbitron market and still comply with the statute. This case thus demonstrates how the Commission's unrealistic definition of radio markets has contributed to the excessive concentration of the radio industry.

Instead of simply granting the license transfer, I would have considered other options -- e.g., requiring the applicant to demonstrate that it attempted to find other buyers for some of the stations -- that would have protected the licensee's interests while enhancing the possibility of bringing diversity back to Bloomington.

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