

JOINT STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONERS
KATHLEEN Q. ABERNATHY AND KEVIN J. MARTIN

Re: Digital Audio Broadcasting Systems and Their Impact on Terrestrial Radio Broadcast Service, MM Docket No. 99-325 (adopted October 10, 2002)

We support today's decision selecting in-band, on-channel (IBOC) as the technology to be used by AM and FM broadcasters for the introduction of digital broadcasting. We commend the work of the industry for developing a model that will not require allocation of additional spectrum and will allow for an efficient transition to digital radio, during which time consumers will be able to receive their current services without disruption. Today's order allows broadcasters to initiate IBOC transmission on an interim basis, thus ensuring that the radio industry can begin to take advantage of the advancements that digital broadcasting has to offer.

As broadcasters face technological limitations and competitive challenges, the ability to move quickly toward digital audio broadcasting has become increasingly important. Digital radio will allow the industry to respond in a timely manner to the competition that they face from satellite radio services and holds great promise for the revitalization of AM service. In addition, the iBiquity system gives broadcasters the flexibility of providing auxiliary services. Thus, consumers will be able to receive a better quality audio signal now and may ultimately benefit from the development of innovative offerings, such as multiple audio streams and data and interactive services.

We do recognize that there may be some interference with existing services, but we believe that the impact will be minimal and is outweighed by the benefits of digital audio broadcasting. We are, however, particularly concerned about the potential for interference to some receivers used for radio reading services for the blind or visually impaired. We are pleased that the Commission will seek comment on measures to protect these established subcarrier services in its FNPRM. In the interim, we expect that broadcasters will work closely with the affected parties to resolve these issues without intervention from the Commission. We are optimistic that, in the short-term, interference issues can be resolved and, in the long-term, the quality and availability of radio reading services will benefit from the technological advancements of digital audio radio service.