

SEPARATE STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER JONATHAN S. ADELSTEIN

Re: Digital Audio Broadcasting Systems and Their Impact on the Terrestrial Radio Broadcast Service, Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking and Notice of Inquiry

Today, we begin the important process of ensuring that our rules are ready for tomorrow's digital radio. Digital radio is the natural evolution of radio, bringing CD quality sound to FM and FM quality to AM. It promises many new service offerings to eager listeners. In January, I was honored to participate in the first commercial launch of HD Radio here in Washington, D.C. at Howard University's WHUR-FM. We literally flipped the switch on digital radio, and it was a major hit.

Digital radio is an opportunity for broadcasters to build on their spectrum to serve the public even better. It's a clear example of doing more with the same spectrum. Broadcasters can now offer consumers more programming services including non-English language programming, on-demand interactive experiences, enhanced auxiliary services, and new data services including local traffic and weather, song and artist information, even sports scores and local news. Through NPR's leadership, the technology offers the possibility of transmitting more than one programming stream through supplemental audio channels.

I look forward to developing a full record on how broadcasters can use this opportunity to better serve their local communities. I welcome our examination of rule changes needed to ensure that broadcasters are meeting their public interest obligations in this new digital age, particularly with respect to supplemental audio channel capability. With this capability, a broadcaster could use each stream to enhance a local community's listening experience with local programming, including local civic and political discourse. These new horizons in radio broadcasting should correspond to new horizons in serving the public interest.

I am particularly pleased that we are seeking comment on how this technology can further our diversity goals and provide greater access for minorities, people with disabilities, or underserved segments of our local communities. I appreciate the willingness of my colleagues to seek comment on how digital radio can enhance political discourse and candidate access to the radio. We also appropriately ask about ways to enhance the broadcast of emergency information and generally how digital technology can enable a broadcaster to better respond to the needs of the community. Of course, there is much more we need to do to advance the public interest, but this is a good start.

The development of digital radio has been a careful and methodical exercise by iBiquity and others, with widespread industry participation and extensive testing to tackle problems as they arise. The Commission now must step up and do its part to ensure that this significant advancement in radio broadcasting fully advances the public interest in broadcasting.