

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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MB
Consumers
Broadcast Audio
Services

June 8, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

Free, over-the-air radio reaches more than 90 percent of all Americans, or approximately 245 million listeners, on a weekly basis, across all parts of the country and demographic groups. Our nation's 4705 AM radio stations engage every day with listeners in their local communities, providing an important source for local news, public affairs and foreign-language programming. AM radio service is also critical to broadcast diversity, as over two-thirds of all minority broadcasters are owners of AM radio stations.

As you know, AM stations face a variety of technical, regulatory and competitive challenges that could undercut the long-term viability of AM radio service, especially in rural areas where Americans may be underserved by broadband and cable access. This is why we were encouraged by then-Acting Chairwoman Clyburn's efforts to address these concerns by launching a proceeding designed to revitalize the AM radio service (MB Docket No. 13-249). The proposals offered by the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking will help many AM stations better serve their audiences with a higher quality signal, in a more technically and economically efficient manner. One such proposal is to open a filing window for AM stations to obtain translators, which will allow many AM stations to provide first-time coverage of local events that often occur during nighttime hours, such as local political debates and high school sports.

We are heartened by your commitment in a recent blog post to move the AM revitalization proceeding forward. Unfortunately the concerns you express regarding an AM-only filing window for FM translators have given us pause. It is our understanding that demand for translators among AM stations continues to outstrip supply, particularly in locations where they are eligible for use by an AM station, which has caused prices for translators to skyrocket out of reach for many AM broadcasters. There are also many areas where there are simply no translators available for potential use by AM broadcasters, at any price.

We appreciate your efforts to expedite matters at the Commission, including far more complex issues such as the IP transition and the TV spectrum incentive auction. The Commission also should promptly advance the AM revitalization proceeding, including the opening of an AM-only window for FM translators, for the benefit of our nation's AM radio stations and their millions of listeners.

We hope you find this input helpful.

Very respectfully,

Pete Olson
Member of Congress

Gene Green
Member of Congress