

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

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July 1, 2015

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The Honorable Thomas Wheeler
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, S.W.
Washington DC 20554

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We write to you extremely concerned about your proposal to close multiple agency field offices across the country. While we are pleased to hear that you have reduced your original proposal to shutter as many as 16 offices, we remain concerned about the adverse effects of closure of more than one third of total offices nationwide will have. The closure of these offices threatens your ability as an enforcement agency to prevent radio disruptions, while in our home state of New York, these disruptions can have major negative implications.

Radio frequency disruptions can cause significant problems for citizens throughout New York, and especially in New York City. Recent complains filed with the Federal Communications Commission have shown there to be at least 34 pirate radio stations operating on rooftops in Brooklyn and in the Bronx alone. Pirate radio, and the interference that comes with it, can cause substantial public safety issues. That interference prevents listeners in New York and New Jersey from getting news, information and entertainment from their favorite radio station. More importantly, when interference occurs during an emergency, millions of people may not hear Emergency Alert System (EAS) alerts from licensed stations. We are aware of at least one station that has asked to change its EAS monitoring assignment because of interference from unauthorized operators to New York Public Radio's WNYC.

Congress, through the FCC, has allocated radio stations in New York and across the country in a careful manner designed to avoid interference, but massive growth of pirate radio operations, particularly in New York City threatens to disrupt that careful distribution. Finally, pirate radio operations threaten legitimate businesses who are operating within the rules established by the FCC. While we recognize the FCC's efforts to address this issue, more needs to be done. We believe that this starts with recognizing that the closure of field offices will not be helpful to the overall goal of preventing these disruptions and ensuring public safety. We urge you to continue to use all possible enforcement tools to address this issue, and to devote what resources you can to help prevent these types of disruptions in New York. While we understand the FCC's resource challenges, we strongly believe preventing interference on radio frequencies is part of your central mission.

Thank you for your continued work to protect consumers nationwide and we look forward to working with you on this important issue.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator