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For Immediate Release

COMMISSIONER STARKS ISSUES STATEMENT ON PROPOSED RULES THAT WOULD BENEFIT SMALL AND MINORITY-OWNED FM BROADCASTERS

WASHINGTON, December 1, 2020 — Commissioner Starks has issued the following statement regarding the adoption of a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking seeking comment on whether to modify the Commission’s FM Booster Rules to permit geo-targeted content to originate from FM booster stations, which could provide a way for small and minority-owned stations to better serve their communities by offering hyper-localized content including alternative language news, weather, emergency alerts, and advertising periodically during the broadcast day:

“I was immediately drawn to this compelling proposal by GeoBroadcast that garnered the support of 21 civil rights organizations, and I was proud to champion it through the FCC process leading to this notice of proposed rulemaking. This is exactly the type of creative policy-making we need to help strengthen the staying power of struggling broadcasters and begin to close the appalling disparity that we see in minority ownership numbers. I see great potential in this proposed FCC action to improve the local radio experience for audiences of small broadcasters and broadcasters of color, and to better position these broadcasters to compete for listeners and advertising dollars.”

Here's what others are saying about today's Notice:

U.S. Representative Yvette D. Clarke (NY-09): “I am proud of the FCC’s consideration of modifying FM booster rules that could potentially help minority-owned stations better serve their communities. I applaud Commissioner Starks' leadership on this issue. As we battle the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important for hyper-localized content, like news and emergency alerts to be delivered to the communities that need this tailored content the most. We must ensure that innovative technologies, like geo-targeting, are used in ways to uplift marginalized communities and spur small business growth.”

U.S. Representative G.K. Butterfield (NC-01): “The norm-shattering events of 2020, from the spread of the novel coronavirus to a historic presidential election, have made clear the absolute

necessity of reliable access to local news and information. This proposal has the potential to both better inform historically underserved communities and level the playing field for small and minority broadcasters. I commend the FCC for its action on this issue and thank Commissioner Starks for his efforts to promote equity in the media marketplace.”

U.S. Representative Tony Cárdenas (CA-29): “In today's competitive media marketplace, we need to do everything we can to help small and minority-owned broadcast stations and give them the tools necessary to deliver critical, localized content to our communities. I thank Commissioner Starks for paving the way for this innovative solution that will help these small stations to better serve their consumers.”

U.S. Representative A. Donald McEachin (VA-04): “Allowing radio stations to broadcast certain targeted content and advertising to specific communities ensures localities receive the news most relevant to them. Today’s action is even more timely given the challenges associated with COVID-19. From multi-lingual, culturally competent PSAs regarding CDC recommendations for COVID-19 to cancer screening advertisements addressing the disproportionate risks of colorectal cancer in Black communities, this change will not only ensure that Virginian households receive the local information they rely upon, but that communities of color specifically are also able to receive local news pertinent to their communities.”

U.S. Representative Marc Veasey (TX-33): “During these unprecedented times, it is more important than ever to give disenfranchised communities the tools they need to stay informed and succeed. This proposal looks to empower minority-owned small businesses while also providing an avenue for more trustworthy local news to communities who are most at risk. I’m looking forward to the updates on this creative rule and I thank FCC Commissioner Starks for leading the charge.”

Maurita Coley, President and CEO of MMTA: “For many years, our organization, along with NABOB and others, has worked hard to improve the disparity of ownership among minorities in the broadcasting industry. Today, we want to acknowledge and thank FCC Commissioner Geoffrey Starks for leading the way to bring this item to a vote. Special thanks are due to Commissioner Brendan Carr and his staff for supporting our efforts to bring attention to this proposal, as well as Chairman Ajit Pai for agreeing to prioritize it. We believe it will help the radio industry expand its ability to reach communities through a geo-targeted signal, and, therefore, provide underserved areas with localized alerts and news.”

Clint Odom, Senior Vice President Policy & Advocacy, National Urban League: “The National Urban League has been a long-time advocate for diversity in media ownership. To understand why this is important, you need only look at the role that Black broadcasters played in the 2020 election cycle, boosting civic participation and engagement by voters across the nation. We join the civil rights community in thanking Commissioner Geoffrey Starks for his support in championing this innovative proposal, and Chairman Pai for prioritizing this action.

This undoubtedly would boost the ability of minority broadcasters to compete in a highly competitive marketplace and reach underserved audiences with critical information and news they can use.”

James Winston, President, National Association of Black Owned Broadcasters: “We commend Commissioner Starks for his initiative in getting this proceeding started. This rule change could enable our NABOB radio stations to use this new technology to provide targeted programming, news, and information in ways that the current broadcasting technology does not permit. We look forward to the opportunities this may provide.”

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