

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

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November 5, 2021

The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel
Acting Chair
Federal Communications Commission
45 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Acting Chair Rosenworcel,

We write on behalf of New Jersey's 9.2 million residents regarding the application for the Federal Communications Commission's (FCC's) authorization of the assignment of the WJLP broadcast television license from PMCM TV, LLC to TV-49, Inc., a subsidiary of Weigel Broadcasting Co. (Lead File Number: 0000163354.)

Pursuant to Section 310(d) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended:

“No ... station license, or any rights thereunder, shall be transferred, assigned, or disposed of in any manner, voluntarily or involuntarily, directly or indirectly, or by transfer of control of any corporation holding such permit or license, to any person except upon application to the Commission and upon finding by the Commission that the public interest, convenience, and necessity will be served thereby. [47 U.S.C. §310(d).]”

In addition, the FCC's *Public and Broadcasting* manual states that “[The FCC expect[s] station licensees to be aware of the important problems and issues facing their local communities and to foster public understanding by presenting programming that relates to those local issues.”¹

Given these requirements, we hope and expect that the FCC's review and analysis of the WJLP application will include a focus on local news and public affairs programming.

This issue is of the utmost importance to New Jerseyans. Our state's local news and public affairs programming has suffered because WWOR-TV has refused for decades to live up to the public interest standards articulated by the FCC. The terms of those standards could not be clearer:

“As applied to applied to [WWOR-TV], the goal of section 331 [of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended] is to establish a VHF television station that is primarily responsive to the issues and concerns of Secaucus and northern New Jersey.”²

¹ Federal Communications Commission, *The Public and Broadcasting*, at <https://www.fcc.gov/media/radio/public-and-broadcasting#FCC> (revised September 2021).

² *RKO General, Inc.*, Decision, 1 FCC Rcd 1081, 1082 (1986).

A broadcast license is valuable public property. A station that possesses one holds a public trust. In return, the station must provide a public service in the form of news and public affairs programming to the communities within its coverage area. At time when the residents of New Jersey are starved for local news, and as more and more newspapers and other media outlets downsize or shutter outright, it is imperative that stations like WJLP keep providing local coverage of the issues that matter to the Garden State.

Perhaps no other state's residents suffer from a lack of local news coverage more than New Jerseyans. Sandwiched between the New York and Philadelphia media ecosystems, New Jersey lacks its own designated market area. As a result, we often find coverage of our state affairs dominated by events occurring in our mega-metropolis neighbors. New Jersey's designated local news station WWOR-TV continues to shirk its statutory obligation, leaving our constituents with few options. We hope WJLP will not be allowed to follow in the terrible precedent set by WWOR-TV.

Ensuring a well-informed citizenry is a prerequisite for any healthy democracy. There is little doubt that our inability to obtain incisive journalism about our own communities is a driving cause of our growing national divisions. A healthy democracy rests on the bedrock foundation of a vibrant, independent press and we hope that the FCC will ensure WJLP continues to deliver for the Garden State.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator