

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS  
CONCURRING**

Re: *Amendment of Section 73.3556 of the Commission's Rules Regarding Duplication of Programming on Commonly Owned Radio Stations*, MB Docket No. 19-310; *Modernization of Media Regulation Initiative*, MB Docket No. 17-105.

Much of our time here at this agency is dedicated to managing the use of spectrum – an incredibly valuable and finite public resource that powers our wireless communications, from broadcasting to broadband. As of now, next month's open meeting will consider how to more efficiently use two bands to enable next generation licensed and unlicensed wireless services. Moreover, we remain in the midst of the post-auction transition of our broadcast incentive auction, a groundbreaking process that we used to repurpose a vast swath of spectrum from broadcasters to wireless service providers – responsive to changing market forces and consumer demands.

This weighed on my mind as we consider today a proceeding largely about whether to eliminate a rule preventing radio broadcasters from duplicating content on commonly owned stations in the same local area. I can think of precious few situations where such an arrangement would be the best use of our spectrum. For this reason, I concur today.

The prospect of allowing current radio station owners to broadcast duplicative content seems particularly questionable to me at a time when women and people of color remain largely absent from radio ownership and opportunities for new diverse owners to enter this business are few and far between. Our latest data, which I must note becomes increasingly outdated by the minute, indicates that women only own 8 percent of this country's commercial FM radio stations; African Americans own 1 percent; Latinos, about 4 percent; and Asian Americans own less than one half of one percent.<sup>1</sup> What does this amount to? Out of thousands of radio station licenses awarded by the Commission, women and people of color collectively only own a few hundred, if that.

So, while I am skeptical that eliminating or modifying this rule would best serve our goals as an agency, I am open to hearing from our stakeholders. To that end, and in the spirit of better understanding how a rule change here would impact diversity, I am grateful that my colleagues agreed to add additional questions. Namely, I am interested in learning more about whether these rule changes would have any special impact on women or people of color who currently own stations or hope to enter this industry, and whether spectrum would be used more efficiently by radio operators airing duplicative content or by other parties in service to our competition and diversity goals. I am hopeful that parties will engage on these questions in the record.

As always, I appreciate the hard work of the Media Bureau. Thank you.

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<sup>1</sup> See FCC, Third Report on Ownership of Commercial Broadcast Stations at 14-15 (2017), <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-344821A1.pdf>.