

**STATEMENT OF  
COMMISSIONER GEOFFREY STARKS**

Re: *Sponsorship Identification Requirements for Foreign Government-Provided Programming*, MB Docket No. 20-299.

It's not a lot to ask that broadcasters and programmers disclose when the source of on-air content originates from, or is funded by, a foreign source. So when I heard earlier this year about a deal to broadcast programming provided by a Russian state-owned entity for six hours a day during prime morning and evening drivetime in the Kansas City market,<sup>1</sup> alarm bells went off.

Capitol Hill was paying attention as well. Representative Anna Eshoo and six other members of Congress sent a letter to the Chairman inquiring about the lack of FCC enforcement action against a broadcaster for airing "Russian propaganda in our nation's Capital" without informing listeners that the broadcasts were sponsored by the Russian government.<sup>2</sup> The Chairman subsequently did direct the Media Bureau to explore the need to modify our sponsorship ID rules as they apply to programming provided by a foreign entity.

That was the right call, and I am therefore pleased to support this notice that recognizes the need for transparency so broadcast viewers and listeners know the source of content they see and hear, and proposes to establish specific disclosure requirements for broadcast programming that is paid for or provided by a foreign government or its representative.

Notably, we take this action in the midst of known attacks on our political processes by foreign governments and their representatives. Although free speech remains a bedrock of our democracy, we as Americans have a right to know when there is a foreign voice behind speech broadcast in the United States. The public must have the full context in order to be informed and make their own decisions in separating truth from disinformation. Because content created by or on behalf of foreign governments and aired on American stations has the potential to leave listeners unwittingly vulnerable to manipulation by a foreign adversary, we must close any existing loopholes by requiring full sponsorship disclosure.

I appreciate the work of Commission staff, especially in the Media and Enforcement Bureaus, for their work on this item.

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Vockrodt, "Kansas City radio station agrees to broadcast Russian-owned 'propaganda' program," The Kansas City Star (Jan. 17, 2020), at <https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/article239359868.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Letter from Anna G. Eshoo, U.S. House of Representatives, et al. to The Honorable Ajit Pai, Chairman, FCC (Feb. 13, 2020), at [https://eshoo.house.gov/sites/eshoo.house.gov/files/wysiwyg\\_uploaded/Letter%20to%20FCC%20re%20Russian%20propaganda%20led%20by%20Reps.%20Eshoo%2C%20Doyle%20-%20202.13.2020.pdf](https://eshoo.house.gov/sites/eshoo.house.gov/files/wysiwyg_uploaded/Letter%20to%20FCC%20re%20Russian%20propaganda%20led%20by%20Reps.%20Eshoo%2C%20Doyle%20-%20202.13.2020.pdf).