

Remarks by Chairman James H. Quello
Before the
Community Broadcasters Association Annual Convention
Washington, DC
November 15, 1993

Thank you for inviting me back to address you during your convention. As you know, I have long been an ardent supporter of the low power television industry. I continue to believe that low power service is an important component of "local" service, and as such, undeniably serves the public interest. I am happy to say that the low power television industry is continuing to grow. Since 1991, when I gave the keynote address at this convention, I have been informed that 200 additional LPTV stations have begun operating in the United States. This brings us to a total of almost 1300 LPTV stations -- about 1050 in the lower 48 states, and 250 in Alaska. There are now 100 more LPTV new operators, reaching a total number of 630 different low power operators that now operate the 1050 stations in the lower 48 states.



Within the past year alone, the FCC staff has granted more than 750 construction permits for low power stations. Thus, we expect the service to continue to grow. To promote this growth further, the Commission released a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in April of this year that proposed several changes in low power television regulation. Several of these were related to relaxing application processing standards -- we proposed to (1) relax the application acceptance standard to reduce the number of applications rejected for relatively minor deficiencies; (2) broaden consideration of applications for terrain shielding waivers by accepting additional types of applications for such waivers; and (3) to expand the definition of "minor" changes in authorization. In addition to applications processing changes, we also proposed to allow LPTV operators to exchange their call signs for the more traditional four letter call sign, to make it easier for consumers to identify the licensee as a broadcaster. I believe that adoption of these changes would promote further development of the LPTV

First, you have to create your own programming niche that will prove that you are an important service to the community and make you more attractive to your local viewers and to distributors that can greatly expand your audience reach, who may soon find that they have excess channel capacity to fill. I have advocated this before, in a way that I have described as "specialized localism." I have always believed that localism is a cornerstone of the public interest standard. You can capitalize on the importance of localism in serving the public interest by developing very specialized programming that uniquely serves your community. For example, in the Washington, D.C. area we have a low power TV station on Channel 48 that provides Spanish language programming. A couple of years ago we unfortunately were experiencing riots in certain D.C. neighborhoods with a high ratio of Spanish-speaking residents.

Channel 48 reached out to the community by inviting our major, Sharon Pratt Kelly, on the air to address the local citizens and to reach out for their assistance in the city's efforts to end the disturbances and looting. This is a very positive example of what community broadcasting can do. You have a very special role to play in providing local service. So, I challenge you to think about what you can do, as community broadcasters, to distinguish yourself from your full-powered competitors with respect to specialized local programming and appeal to your community.

Second, you have to "get the word out." I believe that low power television is still one of the best kept secrets in broadcasting today. Remaining a secret, however, is not in your best interest as an industry. You have to make other regulators and especially your representatives in Congress aware of your potential and what you have to offer to your communities. Nowhere was this more obvious than during the recent enactment of cable legislation, where you achieved only limited success with respect to must carry eligibility.

You must first develop the programming that distinguishes you from other broadcasters, and then make sure that the regulators and other program distributors notice and appreciate what you have done. I am happy to see that you have devoted a significant amount of time during this convention to meet with your representatives in Congress to increase your visibility as an industry in Washington. I think that this is a very important step, and I wish you great success.

Again, thank you very much for inviting me back. It is always a pleasure to address community broadcasters dedicated to specialized local service.

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