

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

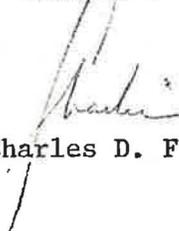
OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

December 14, 1977

To: Commissioner James H. Quello  
From: The Chairman  
Subject: Improvement of UHF Broadcasting

I appreciate your constructive memorandum today on this subject. As I have stated before, I agree that improving broadcast services in the UHF band to provide greater choice for television audiences should have the highest priority. I expect that our discussion of reduction of UHF noise standards, which has been passed to the first Commission meeting in January at your recommendation, will provide us with the chance to begin this agenda.

In particular, I share your concern that we encourage the growth of strong UHF outlets in order to assist the development of public broadcasting and to provide additional ownership opportunities for minorities and other new entrants in commercial broadcasting.

  
Charles D. Ferris

cc: All Commissioners

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UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

# Memorandum

TO : Chairman Charles D. Ferris

DATE: December 14, 1977

FROM : Commissioner James H. Quello

SUBJECT: Improvement of UHF Broadcasting

Your recent comments about a desire to improve broadcasting services in the UHF band were very welcome. I share your interest and I believe that the Commission can take the lead in making improvements which will bring greater service and wider choice in television to the public.

There are at least three reasons why this is a good time to focus on the long-standing problems of UHF. First, fully two-thirds of all public television stations--and 37% of all television stations on the air--operate in the UHF band, many of which are technically handicapped in reaching their communities. Public television is at an important turning point. The President has taken a strong initiative by submitting new financing proposals to the Congress; and, the Congress is asking hard questions about the future of a system so dependent on UHF. In his own language, in his October 6 message to the Congress on public broadcasting, President Carter said:

"...I urge the Federal Communications Commission to seriously consider pending proposals that would bring public (UHF) television and radio closer to parity with commercial stations. These include proposals for better standards for TV set reception of UHF channels and better allocation of FM channels for public radio. I am hopeful that the new leadership at the FCC will give UHF and FM improvements priority attention."

Second, the Commission is under great pressure from a wide variety of minority interest groups whose concerns we can address partially through attention to UHF broadcast outlets.

Third, the technology is available now to begin to set UHF right.

I recommend that we take advantage of the opportunity at hand to develop a concerted, overall plan to improve UHF. We can articulate our desire to put UHF in parity with VHF and we can set a schedule to accomplish it.



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I recommend that the agenda include at least the following things:

- 1) A concerted effort to move toward quick resolution of the receiver noise problem as proposed in Docket No. 21010. This has been an active docket for more than two years and we still lack sufficient data with which to establish reasonable noise-reduction standards. While the problems of noise are interrelated with intermodulation problems in tuner design, I believe that the Commission should move forward as soon as possible with a meaningful reduction in the noise figure while continuing to address the intermodulation problem. Certainly, we can hardly afford to wait until all of the technological problems have been completely resolved before moving ahead. I believe that we can responsibly extrapolate current trends in technology in setting standards to be met in the near future.
- 2) A convening by the Commission at the earliest possible date of a meeting of the manufacturers of lead-in antennas, who should know that their role in the overall improvement of home reception is crucial. Our own research, and that of the electronics community, shows that significant improvement in this vital piece of home-receiver equipment is possible. We should encourage the Receiver Committee of the Electronic Industries Association (EIA) to begin and make a priority work on new standards for lead-in antennas. This is within their realm and we should send them a signal of encouragement.
- 3) A meeting called by the Commission with Varian Associates of Palo Alto, California, which is the sole domestic producer of UHF transmitter klystron tubes. This firm seems on the verge of making a tremendous advance in the efficiency of UHF broadcast apparatus with klystron tube improvements. A reduction in the relatively high energy consumption of UHF transmitters would reduce operating costs of both commercial and non-commercial UHF operations, and would serve the greater public good through energy conservation. If we can urge this U.S. monopoly producer to speed up the availability of the improved tube, these savings can accrue sooner. We might even explore the utility of our own research resources in this effort.

It was a Commission decision twenty-five years ago to create a two-band television broadcasting service and it is up to us to make it work. By taking these initiatives, we can put the Commission on a new path and on the record squarely in favor of expanded consumer choice in television. We can recognize the potential that UHF outlets--where the only broadcast growth is likely to occur in the near future--offer for the expansion of ownership opportunities, including those of minority groups; and we can give them a chance to succeed. We can maximize the investment in a public broadcasting system, whose signals now, while theoretically received by 80% of the population, are so poor as to actually reach only some 60%.

Because of my special interest in the educational aspects of television as well as a shared interest with other Commissioners in the further development of commercial UHF television, I recommend that we move to put UHF improvements among our top priorities because they are long-overdue and they are doable. I believe that our staffs and those of the Broadcast Bureau and Office of Chief Engineer can put together an agenda for action which will guide us and stimulate the broadcasting and electronics industries to do their part. This "total approach" will represent an excellent contribution by the New Commission to the utility and accessibility of UHF broadcast services.

  
James H. Quello

A P Story Dec 16, 1977

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AM-UHF Television, 370<  
By JERRY T. BAULCH=  
Associated Press Writer=

WASHINGTON (AP) - Strong sentiment on the Federal Communications Commission to give high priority to improving UHF television reception was expressed by two commissioners this week. The new chairman, Charles D. Ferris said "improving broadcast service to provide greater choice for television audiences should have the highest priority."

He was responding to a lengthy memo by Commissioner James H. Quello saying there are "at least three reasons why this is a good time to focus on the long-standing problem of UHF."

"First," Quello said, "fully two-thirds of all public television stations - and 37 percent of all television stations on the air - operate in the UHF band, many which are handicapped in reaching their communities."

"...Second, the commission is under great pressure from a wide variety of minority interest groups whose concern we can address partially through attention to UHF broadcast outlets."

"...Third, the technology is available to get UHF right."

Quello said "we can articulate our desire to put UHF in parity with VHF and we can set a schedule to accomplish it."

Ferris told Quello that the commission's discussion of noise standards scheduled for January "will provide us with the chance to begin this agenda."

Ferris and Quello thus join Commissioner Robert E. Lee, who has long been the commission's most vigorous proponent for improving UHF television reception.

Quello said the commission "should move forward as soon as possible with a meaningful reduction in the noise figure" without waiting for solution of all the technical problems that has delayed for two years a tuner design.

He also called for "a convening at the earliest possible date for a meeting of the manufacturers of lead-in antenna, who should know that their role in the overall improvement of home reception is crucial."

Quello said the commission should urge the Varian Associates of Palo Alto, Calif., to speed up the availability of its improved UHF transmitter klystron tubes. The firm is the sole domestic producers of such tubes.

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