

**DISSENTING STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER JESSICA ROSENWORCEL**

Re: *Elimination of Main Studio Rule*, MB Docket No. 17-106.

It was pitch-black dark in Minot, North Dakota on January 18, 2002. It was also bitter cold when at 1:37 AM a train derailed, slammed into a house, and sent a vast white cloud of anhydrous ammonia over the state's fourth-largest city.

If you lived nearby you knew instantly things were not right. "It was like something just grabbed your lungs," said a Minot resident who lived 500 feet from the tracks. Then the electricity went out. So, residents turned to battery-powered radios—the kind we are all told to keep on hand for a disaster. But when they tuned in to their local stations all they heard was canned music and DJ banter piped in from somewhere far, far away. Local radio failed the Minot community that night. It offered content that was anything but what residents needed to know. There are many reasons, apologies, and arguments about why it happened this way. But one thing is clear—when broadcasters have a physical presence in the communities they serve this is much less likely to happen.

Of course, what happened in Minot took place more than a decade and a half ago. But a month and a half ago I received an e-mail from an individual in Beaumont, Texas. He described Hurricane Harvey in harrowing detail. Rain fell from the skies and flooded the roads, turning them into virtual lakes. There were widespread power failures. Some tried to flee the area, others stayed put and attempted to rescue those who were caught in deep water. But, as he writes: "at midnight during the peak of the storm . . . not one single station in this market had live coverage of the storm." Instead, he found his favorite stations broadcasting top 40 formats and national talk programs, oblivious to the trouble in the very community they purport to serve.

There are many broadcasters who do an extraordinary job serving communities during disaster. But let's be honest—they can only do so when they have a real presence in their area of license. That's not a retrograde notion—it's a fact.

I do not believe wiping out the main studio rule is going to solve problems like those in Minot and Beaumont. I do not believe it will lead to better community coverage. I do not believe it will lead to more jobs. I do believe it will hollow out the unique role broadcasters play in local communities—a role that is not just tradition, but an essential part of broadcasting under the Communications Act.

I know that many stations face real economic challenges. I wish we would have agreed to simple waivers for the main studio rule anytime it would allow small- and mid-sized stations to keep the lights on and continue to offer service to their communities of license. I regret we do not take those steps here and instead strip our rules of the very localism that makes broadcasting unique. I dissent.