

REMARKS OF FCC COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR
AT THE 2018 NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF BROADCASTERS SHOW
LAS VEGAS, NV
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I want to thank the National Association of Broadcasters for inviting me to speak here today. Broadcasters reach more Americans than any other form of media. Every week, 93% of Americans tune in to AM and FM radio, according to Nielsen, and we have seen a resurgence in over-the-air TV with broadcast-only TV households increasing by millions over the past few years alone. The vibrant and durable interest in broadcast is no mystery. It's driven by the free, quality programming that you provide to Americans across the country, and especially your engagement with the communities you serve.

We all recognized your vital service to local communities right here, six months ago, in the tragic Las Vegas shootings. This afternoon's panel, "Crisis on the Strip: Reporting in an Unfolding Emergency," gives us a chance to highlight just one of the essential ways that broadcasters serve their communities. The crisis affected so many in Las Vegas—from the victims and their families to law enforcement and first responders. I want to recognize one of those first responders, Clark County Sheriff Joe Lombardo, who will be speaking on the panel. I had the chance to visit with some of Las Vegas's finest when I toured the Las Vegas Police Department's 911 call center in January. Whether law enforcement or citizen, in times of crisis, people across America turn to their local broadcasters for information—information that can help save lives, keep people safe, bring communities together, and bring a semblance of normalcy and hope in the wake of chaos.

Just like everyone in Las Vegas, broadcasters themselves were dealing with the impact of the shooting. But even as their friends and families were gripped by tragedy, broadcasters continued to provide wall-to-wall coverage, including all four broadcast affiliates who dropped their regularly scheduled programming, with reporters sometimes staying on the air up to 20 hours straight to bring insights and answers to their viewers and listeners. Several of those stations are represented on today's panel—Todd Brown, Vice President at KVVU FOX5, Patrick Walker of KLAS 8 who reported on the shooting, and Carla Rae from 96.3 KKLZ, who fielded calls from concerned residents on her program the morning after the shooting.

When disaster strikes, it's hard to overstate the importance of being live and local, of providing continuity and a familiar voice. Broadcasters are consistently on the front lines—not only providing critical, life-saving information, but also offering a path forward for healing, coming together, and rebuilding. As communities band together in a crisis, so do their broadcasters, setting aside their own financial concerns and competitive interests to ensure their viewers and listeners get the news coverage they need, as well as sending crews and supplies to help keep their fellow stations up and running.

We've seen this spirit of broadcasters across the country. During Hurricane Harvey, Houston TV station KHOU's studio flooded. They set up a makeshift studio on the second floor of the building to continue broadcasting. When the station finally evacuated, Brandi Smith and Mario Sandoval continued broadcasting live from the field. During their broadcast, they spotted a truck driver, Robert Roberson, who was stranded in rising flood waters. They immediately flagged down first responders who were able to rescue him thanks to those broadcasters' quick actions. I had the chance to learn more about these and

other efforts when I held a roundtable with broadcasters in Houston at the studios of KPRC2 not long after the storm.

Further east, when Hurricane Irma hit Florida, the extreme weather put a strain on communications systems. Nio Fernandez of Tampa's WYUU-FM recognized the need to get Spanish-language information on the air. So he broadcast for 19 hours straight, translating in real time the information he was getting from English-language news sources. Listeners also called in to help each other find water and shelter and update those who'd evacuated to nearby states.

Back here in the west, when wildfires hit California last year, radio broadcasters in Sonoma and Napa Valleys, whose own homes were threatened and in some cases destroyed by raging wildfires, stayed on the air to provide information, take calls from victims, and play music to comfort their listeners.

These examples of heroic reporting in times of crisis are a stark reminder of the important work our nation's broadcasters perform. But it is also important to remember, particularly for those of us that work in Washington, that broadcasters are not alone in seeking to bring news, information, and entertainment to Americans across the country. We have more choices than ever before in deciding when and how to consume information—from 24-hour cable news channels to YouTube Stars from online streaming and apps to social media. Given all these choices—all of this competition for America's eyes and ears—it is perhaps more important than ever that the FCC undertake a thorough review of its media regulations and ensure that our approach to broadcasting reflects the realities of today's media landscape. We should be making your jobs as broadcasters easier, not harder.

But for decades, the FCC's media regulations languished without update. As the media marketplace evolved, the Commission failed to keep pace. Rather than removing regulations that became outdated, the FCC demonstrated a tendency to tack on yet another regulation or filing requirement. These outdated rules have taken up too many dollars and too much manpower—resources that could be going to newsgathering or upgrading facilities so broadcasters can better serve their local communities.

Since the start of 2017, the FCC has been engaged in a comprehensive media modernization proceeding. We're taking a hard look at all our media rules and cutting the red tape that's jamming up broadcasters and discouraging investment and innovation.

Now, not all of our decisions are big ticket items or headline grabbers. But I am confident that they are making a difference. In October of last year, for example, we voted to eliminate a World War II-era main studio rule—a decision that one broadcaster at my Houston roundtable said will allow the company to hire an additional reporter to cover local news and sports. In January of this year, we voted to eliminate a 1930s requirement that broadcasters mail paper copies of their contracts to the FCC, even though broadcasters could easily send these contracts via email instead. Speaking of the Internet, we voted in February to eliminate a rule that broadcasters keep a hard copy of our regulations at their stations, another fat stack of papers that is easily available online. That same month, we began the process of eliminating the requirement that broadcasters file EEO information that is already in their online public files. And later this month, we'll vote to remove a requirement that every TV station file an annual report indicating whether they provide any "ancillary services." Even though only a dozen stations nationwide provide such services, the FCC has been requiring the more than 6,000 stations in the U.S. to file reports with the FCC indicating that they offer no ancillary services.

Individually, these unnecessary regulations may not seem like a big deal. But the cumulative burden of spending time and resources on needless compliance can be devastating, especially for smaller broadcasters and those in rural areas. Outdated and unnecessary FCC regulations should never be what stands in the way of hiring another reporter or launching a new program. Our rules should not be discouraging investment and innovation in local broadcasting.

In addition to the media modernization proceeding, we're also looking at our media ownership rules. In November of 2017, we voted to eliminate the newspaper/broadcast cross-ownership ban. In an era of declining ad revenues and competition from online news sources, the record showed that this ban, passed in 1975, was doing far more harm than good. For similar reasons, we eliminated the radio/television cross-ownership rule to help give broadcasters more flexibility to attract investment. We also repealed the attribution rule for television joint sales agreements. The record was clear that JSAs, and other sharing arrangements, enable broadcasters to attract critical revenue in a marketplace with fierce competition for ad dollars and viewers. When I visited Jackson, Mississippi, earlier this year, broadcasters at WLBT and Fox 40 told me that, by sharing resources, including studio space and equipment, they are able to provide more local news coverage to residents of the Magnolia State.

The FCC has longstanding goals to promote localism, competition, and diversity of voices. Alleviating the burdens of regulation will help us better achieve those goals and help broadcasters better serve their local communities.

Robust competition is a good thing, and consumers benefit greatly from it. So we need to make sure our rules allow broadcasters to take the steps they need to stay competitive in an ever-changing marketplace. That's why I was glad to vote to authorize Next-Gen TV or ATSC 3.0, which has the potential to dramatically improve free over-the-air television service by delivering higher quality picture and sound, advanced emergency alerts, and new accessibility features. By giving broadcasters the freedom to innovate—a freedom, by the way, that their competitors and many others in the tech sector enjoy without the need for any FCC approval—we enable consumers to realize the benefits of this innovation.

In the months ahead, I am committed to continuing the FCC's work to update our rules and remove barriers that are holding broadcasters back or discouraging investment and innovation in the marketplace. After all, if we want to incentivize greater investment in journalism and additional resources for local reporting, then we should eliminate regulations that are preventing this investment.

So thank you again to the National Association of Broadcasters for inviting me to speak here today, thank you to this afternoon's panelists for all that you did during the unfolding crisis on The Strip, and thank you to our nation's broadcasters for everything you do to keep Americans connected. I look forward to this afternoon's discussion and to the rest of the show.