SOUTH CAROLINA STATE MUSEUM
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

IN RE:

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

MEDIA OWNERSHIP WORKSHOP

Tuesday, February 23, 2010

1:30 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.
APPEARANCES:

ROBERT COBLE, Mayor, Columbia, SC

MIGNON CLYBURN, Commissioner,
Federal Communications Commission

WILLIAM LAKE, Chief, Media Bureau,
Federal Communications Commission

PANELISTS:

STEVE WALDMAN
P.S. BENNETT
BILLY HUGGINS
J.T. MC LAWHORN
RICH O'DELL
STEFANIE REIN
DONITA REIN
DR. BARBARA ZIA
SHERRESE SMITH
MR. LAKE: Welcome.

I'm Bill Lake, the Chief of the Media Bureau of the Federal Communications Commission.

And I want to welcome everyone to this workshop organized by the FCC on the subject of media ownership.

We are reviewing our rules on the ownership of radio and television stations.

And the input we receive at workshops, such as this one will be extremely useful to us.

This is our first workshop outside of the United -- outside of Washington, DC -- (Laughter) -- and we are delighted to be here in Columbia.

The subject of our first session this afternoon will be the state of the television market.

Then after a break, we will have a second session on the state of the radio market.

Each session will include a panel discussion.
And then we will have open mic, and we look forward to hearing questions and comments from members of the public. And we want to thank the South Carolina State Museum for so graciously hosting us today.

Before we begin our first panel, we have a few opening remarks. And I'm delighted that we have with us Mayor Robert Coble to open the proceedings.

MAYOR COBLE: Let me welcome everyone and thank you all for being here at this very important media ownership workshop. Let me thank Commissioner Clyburn for bringing this here. I know you could meet anywhere, and we appreciate so much you being here. And let me also recognize Mrs. Clyburn, who is here. And we always are delighted to be in her presence. I think this is very important, and a very important day for Columbia. And we are delighted that you are here, and we look forward to you all having a
very successful conference and workshop here.

Thank you.

MR. LAKE: Now, we are also very
delighted to have with us FCC Commissioner
Mignon Clyburn.

COMMISSIONER CLYBURN: Good
afternoon.

I would like to thank -- I had to
think when you said "Mayor Robert Coble."

I’m like: Who is that?

I would like to thank Mayor Bob --
that's what we call him -- for his many years
of service.

Mayor Bob, as you know, is making
a -- kind of political segue.

And so, I want to thank him on
behalf of those who live and work in this City
of Columbia and those in surrounding areas for
your many years of service.

It's going to be really strange to
not be able to say Mayor Bob and see those
little bumper stickers.

But you served this city well, and
we are all thankful.

I would like to thank my colleagues
at the Federal Communications, and some of my local friends, here in Columbia, for joining us as we continue the extensive process of reviewing the Commission's broadcast ownership rules.

By statute, the FCC is required to review its broadcast ownership rules and repeal or modify any regulation that it determines is no longer in the public interest.

In assessing the public interest, we must stay focused on promoting the two key aspects of the public interest; namely, competition and diversity.

These aims have been part of our regulatory fabric for decades and continue to be relevant, because broadcasters are still an essential source of news and information for Americans.

I am particularly interested to hear from our panelists about how the television and radio markets have evolved over the last several years.

With so many new choices for paid video and the exponential growth of the Internet, the landscape has undoubtedly
changed, but the effect of these changes is still an open question in my mind and in the minds of many.

What would be most helpful for me is for our panelists, and those in attendance, to address how our existing rules impact, one way or another, competition and diversity in broadcasting.

What, if any, changes must we take? And why would different rules make the desired impact?

And why would any different rules make the desired impact?

The fact of increased consolidation will also be an important subject discussed here today.

I have personally grave concerns over consolidation, in general.

But I am eager to learn more about its impact on the local community.

Does programming change under this framework?

Where are the cost savings?

What does the end product look like?
And what is the impact on the communities that have traditionally been under or unrepresented in and by traditional media?

I thank our panelists and the community at large for taking the time out today to inform us of their views and experiences.

We can sit at our desks all day long in Washington, DC -- and the great nation of Washington, DC -- trying to come up with solutions to apparent problems; but until we get out into the communities actually affected by our rules, we will never truly understand the import of our actions.

So, I thank all of you for joining us today.

And I have to, on a selfish note, thank my family, as was mentioned -- those four people in the center -- are members of my family: My sister, my brother-in-law and good friend, Charlie Brett, thank all of you.

But I point them out, especially, for spending time with us this afternoon and reminding us -- and reminding me -- of the importance of this mission, and the importance
of this panel today.

Thank you.

(Applause)

MR. LAKE: Thank you very much, Commissioner Clyburn.

We will now begin with our first Panel.

Each of the panelists will speak for ten minutes.

And I will very rigorously enforcing that limit in order to preserve time for hearing from the public, which is one of the important functions of this session.

I will turn it over now to the moderators for the first panel.

They are Steve Waldman, Senior Advisor to FCC Chairman Genachowski;

and P.A. Bennett, Director of Minority Programming for South Carolina Educational Television.

Steve?

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you very much.

First, just a housekeeping note, that for those of you who were expecting this to be the Jimmy Buffett concert --
(Laughter)

-- our apologies, but this will be just as interesting.

I want to, first, just introduce the

very impressive panel that we have here today.

We will be hearing from Billy

Huggins, the general manager of WPDE and WWMB

in Myrtle Beach and Florence;

J.T. McLawhorn, President and CEO of

Columbia Urban League;

Rich O'Dell, President and general

manager of WLTX TV in Columbia;

Stefanie Rein -- am I saying that

right?

MS. REIN: Rein (Rain.)

MR. LAKE: -- sorry -- the

owner of WKTC and WNXG in Elgin, South

Carolina;

Donita Todd, Vice-President and

general manager of WIS in Columbia;

And Barbara Zia, President of The

League of Women Voters of South Carolina.

So, why don't we -- do you have

anything you would like to say before we get

started?
MS. BENNETT: I think this is exciting, having been in television and radio for too many years to mention here in public. I think allowing the community to have input and some understanding of what is going on, even though I have worked in this business for so many years, I have no clue as to what the FCC is really all about.

So, this is a learning opportunity for all of us.

And I hope that we all have questions that will get answers and will enlighten us and allow us to make better choices.

So, it's a great joy for me to be here today.

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you.

So, with the context that Commissioner Clyburn laid out; that this is both about regulatory issues, but more importantly, how it actually connects to the real world of the media that people are experiencing in their own lives, including the provision of local news and information.

Why don't we dive right in.
And I think first up, we are going to hear from Billy Huggins, the general manager of WPDE in Myrtle Beach/Florence.

MR. HUGGINS: Can everyone hear me?

Good afternoon, Commissioners and all, and especially Commissioner Clyburn.

We are very excited to have you here.

And welcome to Columbia.

My name is Billy Huggins, and I'm here on behalf of WPDE TV, the ABC affiliate for Myrtle Beach and Florence viewing area.

In addition, we have a local marketing agreement with Sagamore Hill, the owner and operator of WWMB TV-21 which serves the Myrtle Beach/Florence market as a CW affiliate.

I'm also currently serving as President-elect of the South Carolina Broadcasters Association.

And I'm happy to be here with you to share all the ways we serve our viewers in the Myrtle Beach/Florence communities.

We in the Myrtle Beach/Florence area are facing many new and difficult challenges.
Our market is small, just 287,000 households; and eight, mostly rural, North and South Carolina counties.

And our industry is changing in ways we have never seen before.

Despite these changes, we continue to shine a needed light on local issues of public concern, participate in and interact with our community, and provide a range of viewing choices for our viewers and audience.

For example, on the programming side, we continue to produce four hours of live local news daily;

a weekly Sunday morning public affairs program, that we call Carolina This Week, that gives every elected official and every candidate for any local, state, or federal office a free forum to discuss important issues in our community;

and more than 60 hours annually of local-interest programming from community events and local debates to high school and/or college sports.

We also host monthly programming
related call-in sessions in our studio that provide viewers free advice on everything from legal to retirement planning.

In fact, this month's topic spotlights the importance of participation in the upcoming 2010 census.

In addition, we continue our commitment to the hard-hitting, in-depth investigative reporting on local issues that our viewers expect.

In just the last few days, we covered budget issues in Timmonsville; the Myrtle Beach downtown revitalization plan; the upcoming criminal trial of a former Dillon County deputy sheriff; and the return of local Marines from their overseas deployments.

We worked to provide these stories to our viewers, not just over our air, but with a popular interactive website we call Carolinalive.com, where our continuous news desk posts and updates stories around the clock.

Our local news desks are also
committed members of the Myrtle Beach and Florence community and volunteer hundreds of local hours in public service.

Our chief meteorologist, Ed Piotrowski, has attended more than 200 public meetings last year to discuss emergency preparation issues with our viewers.

Ed and our main anchor, Allison Floyd, volunteer every month in the public schools to talk about the importance of reading, math, and the sciences.

Our sports director, Rich Chrampanis, created a scholarship fund now in its 10th year, that provides five local students $5,000 to attend a South Carolina college.

Our long-time Hometown Heroes program has raised thousand of dollars for the Red Cross in counties like Georgetown, Horry, and Williamsburg.

We have helped community groups raise tens of thousand of dollars to send area World War II veterans to visit the World War II Memorial and to assist the relief efforts in Haiti.
And we air more than 80 public
service announcements per day in both English
and Spanish.

I have attached a list of more than
125 PAs we have aired in just the last six
months.

You will see that nearly all of
these are on behalf of a local or state
organization.

The WPDE and WWMB arrangement is one
of the longest running LMA's in the country.

And it allows us to provide more
local programming and better community
service.

For example, under this arrangement,
WWMB operated as an independent station with no
network programming for almost 15 years before
we became a CW affiliate.

This would have been impossible in a
market our size, if WWMB had tried to stand
alone.

The LMA has also allowed us to
provide a 10:00 p.m. news program on WWMB's
schedule, and because of the flexibility
provided by the LMA, several years ago, we were
able to relocate WPDE's main studio from Florence, its community of license, to Conway. Conway is the seat for Horry County -- is the county seat for Horry County, and just 15 miles inland from the rapidly-growing Myrtle Beach.

This move has allowed us to be closer to most of our viewers, news makers and local advertisers; and, at the same time, we maintain news and sales staff in Florence to serve the Pee Dee.

With the extra channel capacity, we are able to air over 60 ACC and SEC basketball games.

During college football season, we air an SEC football game every week -- go Carolina -- and several Coastal Carolina football games.

The arrangement also allows Myrtle Beach/Florence viewers to enjoy five different television stations in one of the smallest markets in the country.

The LMA allowed us to offer first-rate local service in a time when the business climate in our industry is the worst it's been
in decades; and in my career -- forever.

We have the money to pay for expensive local programming -- we earn the money, and make the money -- to pay for expensive local programming one way -- by selling ads.

By contrast, cable has two revenue streams; they have subscribers and ad sales.

And in the case of the Internet sites we compete with, the start-up and distribution costs are close to zero.

We have already seen local ad dollars move from broadcast TV to cable and the web.

In addition, and unlike us, no FCC rule or law restricts cable channels and websites from combining to enjoy economic efficiency.

In many ways, we are competing in this Stargate industry in time with our Happy Days business model.

Everyday we are up against hundreds of cable channels, several newspapers and countless website for our viewers' attention.

We view new media as an opportunity,
as well as the challenge.

It lets us reach our viewers and
lets our viewers reach us faster and easier
than ever before.

We have committed to remaining an
important part of the Myrtle Beach/Florence
community and to the public service
responsibilities that go with it.

It's great that we are able to talk
about these important issues here in this
museum, which celebrates the history of our
great state.

I can't think of a better place to
have a conversation about the future of the
media in South Carolina.

And our media's future is our
future.

I would be happy to respond to any
questions.

Once again, thank you very much for
coming.

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you very much.

We are going to go through the whole
panel and then come back around to questions.

I forgot -- I think we skipped
over -- Sherrese Smith is also here on the
panel with us.

She's legal advisor to the Chairman
of the FCC, as well.

So, now we would like to hear from
J.T. McLawhorn -- am I pronouncing that correct?

MR. MC LAWHORN:  Good afternoon.

MR. WALDMAN:  And you are the
President of the Urban League?

MR. MC LAWHORN:  Yes. That's
correct.

Good afternoon to Commissioner
Clyburn.

Thank you so very much for hosting this
event.

This is truly diversity in a forum
that transcends not just ethnicity, but culture, too.

Quite often when we talk about
diversity -- we talk about not only race but
ethnicity, too.

And for us to have a hearing in
Columbia, South Carolina, is a breakthrough.

I greet you on behalf of The Urban
League.

The Urban League is celebrating its
100th anniversary.

The Urban League, as you may note from the Woodson report, The National Urban League is credited with promoting the history of economic development for African-Americans.

So, we certainly support the effort to expand diversity in the broadcasting industry.

I want to talk -- I have prepared comments -- about the media and the way African-Americans are portrayed in the media.

Most often a community perception is determined by how it is covered by the media.

Over the years, The Columbia Urban League has developed a strong relationship with local media, and it implements its mission to promote equal opportunity for the disenfranchised.

Although television news reports, in particular, can define a community, in many instances there is a gap in how a community views itself when compared to -- with the media's interpretation. Perceptions portrayed by the media are often not accurate, because the lens used to tell the story aren't always
reality focused, but situational, which is not necessarily in sync with the reality of the community.

It's not what we see or how we see it, it's what we don't see.

Recently, the History Channel carried a story of gangland in Columbia, South Carolina.

And it was really interesting, because we live in a community that had no idea this type of gang was going on.

So, we didn't see this from our perspective.

And when the question was asked: Are only African-Americans in gangs here -- because that's how they were depicted on TV -- one of the persons in the law enforcement community said: No. We have gangs in every ethnicity in every community.

But from the viewer's point, it seemed as if it was only a black situation -- we have people in gangs.

That's why the media must be especially diligent in seeking stories to help to show a community in its entirety; otherwise, African-Americans
and other minorities will continue to be bombarded with seeing themselves portrayed as a culture of worthlessness that is not reflective of the community and its totality.

Media outlets have strived and provided fair and balanced coverage; however, there still remains a long way go.

People by nature tend to generalize, rather than explore an issue or situation in its entirety; therefore, when most negative stories are reported about particular groups of people, inaccurate assumptions or stereotypes are the result.

That's why the media should work extremely hard to counter inaccurate generalization and make a conscious effort to balance their reporting with stories that are positive in nature.

The importance of how African-Americans are covered by the media was addressed in 1968 by the President's Commission that studied the cause of inner-city riots.

The Kerner Commission report indicated the media must publish newspaper and produce programs that recognize the existence and
activities of the Negro, both as a Negro and as
part of the community.

   It should be a contribution of
inestimable importance to race relations in the
United States simply to treat ordinary news
about Negroes as news of other groups is now
treated.

   In 1996, The Columbia Urban League
and its publication Black South Carolina, did a
study in which we examined how African-
Americans were covered in the news in our
marketplace.

   It's interesting, because Columbia
has about -- Columbia has about 40 percent and
South Carolina has one/third percent of
African-Americans.

   So, for the media outlet, it
shouldn't be difficult to cover stories of
African-Americans.

   What we saw, in essence, according to the
authors, there was a lot of negative portrayal
of African-Americans.

   Positive and negative stories were
to be expected over time, according to the
authors, Ernie Wiggins, Kenneth Campbell, and Sonya
Forte Duhe -- journalism professor at the University of South Carolina.

They go on to write: A familiar anecdote in the African-American community contends that when blacks do something good, the media are nowhere to be found; but when a shooting or some other problem arises, reporters and cameras ascend upon the community.

The anecdote might be exaggerated, but its perception is real in the African-American community.

The author also cited a 1992 study that found African-Americans were most likely to be included in network prime news stories than in other categories.

More than a decade since The Urban League's examination of television coverage, locally there has been more African-American news anchors than before.

The number of African-American reporters have improved but seem to fluctuate and few, if any, African-Americans hold decision-making roles in selecting news stories and editing comments; that is, news directors.
Programming focusing on issues relevant to African-Americans in the Midland and the state continue to remain minimal.

At the same time, the African-American centered programming that does exist, fails to connect African-Americans with mainstream society.

Such news programs should do more to show the interrelationship between the races and their ideals.

We contend there has been some progress, but we still fall short in portraying African-Americans as part of the total fabric of our society.

Time and time again, it has been shown that television network have unparalleled power to promote social justice; therefore, networks should continuously examine their staffing at all levels and use decisions to insure fair and balanced coverage of the communities they serve.

They must understand that diversity goes beyond race and gender.

Job candidates, whether white or black, should be vetted for their experiences
and comfort level with working with diverse cultures. And there should be an ongoing familiarity with the issues and sensitivity of the communities they serve.

With that comes the need of identity and cover issues and stories of relevance to African-Americans with the same attention or aggressiveness as crime stories or other issues, such as education, quality-of-life issues that work to perpetuate negative stereotypes.

For example, for every story that depicts a mostly minority, high-poverty school as failing to meet national and state academic standards, a story could be told about another school with similar socio-economic status that is excelling.

Where there are gaps/disparities in academic achievement, health, finances or other quality-of-life issues, there is a person or program that is working to close those gaps.

Who is an African-American male entrepreneur who has taken time to mentor minority students?

Is there a community that is banding
together to fight crime?

What programs would help to guide African-Americans as they work to attain the financial stability as their white counterparts?

How about covering the school that was referenced in the 2008 edition of The State of Black South Carolina, where culturally-relevant teaching is working to raise the academic success of African-American students.

These are some of the stories that can be told -- that are being overlooked.

While the public may see more African-American’s faces when they turn on their televisions, they may not be aware that behind the scene there is little or no representation at the decision-making table.

Coverage and content decision are at the core of how news is presented.

The unique perspective that can be given about an African-American needs to be reflected in how a story is presented.

More importantly, television stations should examine its decision-making.

Given the power of the media that's
invested in local television, they must focus on two questions:

One, what message do we want to send?

And two, what message are we sending?

Until those questions are addressed, we will continue to have discussions about the life of fair and comprehensive coverage of the minority community.

We also encourage the FCC to call for a national examination of the amount and type of coverage devoted to African-Americans and other minorities, so that the media can enhance its awareness and balance the news coverage.

Thank you.

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you very much. Next we will hear from Rich O'Dell, the President and general manager of WLTX in Columbia.

MR. O'DELL: Good afternoon. My name is Rich O'Dell. I'm President and general manager of WLTX, the Gannett-owned CBS affiliate here in Columbia,
South Carolina.

I would like to thank the Commission for coming to Columbia today.

Commissioner Clyburn, welcome home.

And we are very happy that you are here for the discussion -- very important issues facing the broadcast industry.

For a little bit of background, I think I have a unique perspective.

I have been in the business 40 years.

I have worked for a variety of owners, from an independent single station UHF operator in the early seventies, through group operators, including a network O&O and now Gannett.

When I started in this business, all news video was shot on film.

Cable was merely a transmission platform.

There was no home video. There were no computers. Nobody had the Internet. There was no satellite TV. There was no Fox. There were no cell phones. No Facebook, and no Twitter.
People wanting information after the morning paper was published, tuned in to the local TV station that evening at six or 11 o'clock to find out what happened during the day.

As a side note, this is exactly the time when the current media ownership rules were being written.

Fast forward now to 2010. We find a completely different landscape.

The advancement in technology in recent years has dramatically altered the business. And today we find ourselves dealing with a permanent reset of the operations.

The business once concentrated in television, radio, newspapers -- has now exploded.

And instead of a few content voices, there are now millions of voices.

In fact, everyone with a computer or cell phone has a voice and can be heard.

Some of the most influential voices don't come from traditional media at all, but from political blogs, tweets and Facebook posts.
This new flood of information sources has fractionalized the information-seeking audience.

Advertising, which is the life blood of commercial media, used to be concentrated in traditional newspapers, television, radio, magazines, and billboards.

Today, those same dollars are being split among hundreds of entities that didn't exist ten years ago.

While I believe television is still the absolute best advertising medium in the country, the share of total advertising pie has diminished.

Couple that with the economics of the past two years, and the structure of all broadcast operations in the United States has been permanently altered.

Very difficult decisions have been made at every station, and priorities have been called into question.

While the platforms we use to deliver news and information have expanded greatly, the one thing that hasn't changed is our commitment to our community and our
commitment to deliver vital information to the people we serve.

In fact, the new platforms we are using have a real benefit to the community, because information is now available to consumers whenever they want it, 24/7, and it's available in the format that they choose.

In fact, my 81-year-old father doesn't stay up to watch the late news but does get his updates online.

At WLTX in Columbia, we produce 28 and a half hours of news per week.

And it features realtime closed captioning.

Two weeks ago when Columbia got 8.6 inches of snow, the most we had seen in over 30 years, our people jumped into action, providing ongoing reports for the community, through an additional six hours of nonstop programming.

Our heavy community involvement includes our On Your Side efforts.

We receive a tremendous number of phone calls every week asking for our help in solving problems like dealing with contractor scams, local disaster relief and getting action
from various agencies.

Our weekly Restaurant Report Card, which has been on the air for ten years, is accredited by state officials for helping make local restaurants much safer.

Our community involvement includes major projects such as our E-recycling day, where last year almost 100,000 pounds of old electronic equipment, and 50,000 pounds of tires were collected.

Our Hero Central food drive netted 40 tons of food.

A diaper drive benefiting underprivileged moms collected over 100,000 diapers.

And our annual Stuff A Bus program made the holiday season much brighter for 8,000 children in the Columbia area in December.

WLTX is Columbia's original Crime Stopper station, assisting law enforcement agencies to encourage citizens to come forward with information that helps apprehend criminals, and it's very successful.

At WLTX, we make good use of our secondary digital channels.
Beginning in 2004, we were one of the original stations in the country to utilize digital channels to broadcast all games of March Madness, the NCAA Tournament.

Since then, we’ve created a local 24/7 weather channel and used an additional channel to broadcast community events, such as political debates, town hall meetings, sports, special programming dealing with everything from race relations to teen problems.

I am very proud of our efforts here in South Carolina to create what I believe to be the most effective Amber Alert program in the country.

Back in 2002, I was part of a committee of broadcasters who came together with law enforcement to design and implement a strong statewide Amber Alert program.

And to date, we have activated the alert 36 times, and 44 children have been returned home safely.

As you can see, even though the structure of our business has been permanently altered, our underlying commitment to the community stands tall.
But all that community service does not generate revenue.

It does not pay for the salaries of the people who are in the trenches making it happen.

We do it because we believe it's our responsibility.

It's our duty to the community we serve.

But I must say, as our business gets tighter, and stations are forced to make more difficult decisions, those community service efforts that we all value so highly, may not happen as often as we like; and in some cases, could disappeared altogether.

Look at what's happening around the country.

A number of stations have stopped doing local news altogether, based on financial considerations.

Some newspapers, in both large and small cities, have ceased to exist.

This workshop today is meant to discuss media ownership.

And it asks whether the rules
currently in place serve the needs of both the
public and broadcasters.

Let me take you back to that visual
of the early seventies that I discussed earlier
at the beginning of my remarks.

Now look at today. In those 35
years, we have witnessed the most profound
transformation any business could imagine.

Unfortunately, the rules governing
the business have not changed -- and are
outdated.

Assumptions made, and some rules
written based on 1960s and 1970s realities, are
just not valid today.

For example, the eight-voices rule
is not suitable in a world of 1,000 voices.

The TV/newspaper cross-ownership
rule now hinders the kind of programming and
information developed in the public interest
that the FCC is seeking.

Imagine, if one of those struggling
newspapers I spoke of earlier had been allowed
to be owned by the same company that owned a
local television station, the paper probably
could have been saved, and together they could
have continued with an even stronger service to
the local community.

Now, today, as audiences continue to
divide and advertising revenues continue to
split, broadcasters may be faced with a harsh
reality of cutting back some services.

None of us in this room wants that
to happen, and that's why we are here today.

I believe this is absolutely the
right time to revisit ownership rules.

I applaud the Commission for coming
to Columbia to continue the process.

Thank you very much for giving me
this opportunity to speak.

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you very much.

Next, we will hear from Stefanie
Rein, owner of WKTC and WNXG in Elgin, South
Carolina.

MS. REIN: Thank you.

Good afternoon, Commission Clyburn.

Thank you so much for being here.

It's great to be a part of this workshop
today.

My name is Stefanie Rein, and I'm the
owner and general manager of WKTC-My63 and
WNXG-Telemundo67 here in Columbia.

With change comes opportunity.

That's been a motto of our stations for the past five years.

I would like to share a little bit about the story of our stations that's taken place over the past several years.

I moved to Columbia in 2003 to become the general manager of Channel 63, which at that time, was a WB affiliate.

It was an underperforming station that came with many challenges, but with each small change we began to see ourselves emerge as a competitor.

In 2005, I had the privilege of buying that station. And ownership came with a whole new set of challenges.

In 2006, we went through what could only be called the perfect storm, beginning with losing our WB affiliation three months after we closed on the sale due to the WB network ceasing operation.

With our network affiliation in question, national advertisers began to jump ship, and while our advertising revenues were
declining, we were still under the FCC deadline
to build out our digital facility, which was not a cheap
undertaking.

We became a My Network TV affiliate;

but, unfortunately, during our first ratings
period in November, 2006, we dropped below
Nielsen Media's reportability minimum and were
left out of the next four ratings books.

Just when we hoped things might turn
around, the economy started to decline, and our ad revenues
dropped even further.

Things looked very bleak for the station.

It was time for us to change course.

While the station began to go through a
rebuilding process, we focused a large part of
our effort on our local community presence and
began to base the station's reputation on our
community outreach.

We aligned ourselves with charitable
organizations in the community that we could
partner with to make a difference for the
people of Columbia, in addition to helping the
station build a stronger image.

Most of the partnerships were
designed for the charities to raise money and
included both on-air promotion and station representation at the event.

For example, we sponsored a motorcycle ride and rally for Camp Chemo - a summer camp for children with cancer.

We also co-sponsored golf tournaments for The Make a Wish Foundation and Pets, Inc.

Some relationships were simply to give to the less fortunate and had no real impact or benefit for the station, such as our relationship with the Carolina Children's Home.

Since money is tight and cash sponsorships are nearly impossible for us to accommodate, we would donate tickets to events in Columbia, like the circus, Disney on Ice and Sesame Street Live, so that they could take the residents of the children's home to events that they might not otherwise get a chance to see.

However, no partnership has meant more to us than our relationship with the Volunteers of America -- Carolinas organization.

WKTC was the first, long-term media
partner they had been associated with, and we

were able to help them get some much-needed
visibility for their programs, such as
Children's Garden and Rolling Readers, and to
partner with them on some of the outstanding cross-
promotional ventures.

Over the past several years, during
the holiday season, Volunteers of America has
sponsored an entire evening of holiday
programming, such as Miracle on 34th Street.

They had all the local ad time, and
we helped create special vignettes highlighting
the services VOA Carolinas offered, such as
Children's Garden -- a day-care center for
children whose parents are homeless or in
crisis, low-cost housing for the disabled and
elderly, and Willow Pond, a battered women's
shelter.

The first year we tried this, they
had an amazing response.

I received a call from the President
of VOA Carolinas the day after it aired, and he
said the phones never stopped ringing, and they
even received a call from a woman who lives in
Canada but had been in Columbia seeing her family for the holidays and said after seeing the vignettes for Children's Garden, she felt compelled to call and offer her support.

In 2007, I had the opportunity to acquire Channel 67, a Low Power station here in Columbia.

The original plan had been to use it as a translator of Channel 63.

However, we began to notice in Columbia that there was a need for Spanish-language television.

After doing some initial research on the Hispanic market in Columbia, I approached Telemundo about an affiliation agreement.

And in August 2007, we launched WNXG, the first Telemundo affiliate in the State of South Carolina.

In September 2009, Telemundo was added to WKTC's sub-channel 63.2, allowing it to now cover the entire market.

With the addition of WNXG, it gave us the opportunity to increase our revenue stream and presented us with a chance to touch an entirely new audience.
After launching our digital signal, WKTC became a much stronger competitor. Our digital coverage nearly doubled that of our analog. And overnight, we had a brand new audience who had never seen or heard of WKTC. Because of our new signal pattern, and the additional opportunities presented with broadcasting digitally, we jumped at the chance to add new programming to our sub-channels. We currently broadcast WKTC on 63.1; Telemundo on 63.2; and Retro TV on 63.3. A station that only a short time ago before barely had one revenue stream, now has three strong, viable revenue streams.

There will never be a replacement for local broadcasting. While the audience has become more fragmented, a trend which is more than likely permanent, there is still a feeling of comfort to have a hometown station. Viewers want to feel that they are a part of something and have a sense that our station is their station.
As the only locally-owned and
operated TV station in Columbia, we
take our commitment to community very
seriously.
In addition to our outreach efforts,
we also put a tremendous emphasis in our
on-air efforts.
Each year WKTC and WNXG run public
service announcements for a variety of local,
national, and international causes.
This translates into tens of
thousands of dollars in inventory.
PSAs are placed in all dayparts,
including prime, allowing for greater
audience composition.
While we do not have an in-house
production staff for things other than
commercial production, we strive to include
local issue and public service programs as
often as possible.
For nearly two years, we had a
weekly program called Teen Forum on the air
on the weekends.
Teen Forum was a locally produced
show by teens, for teens.
A group of young people would go to different high schools in Columbia and the surrounding area, and in a school-assembly format, would debate issues such as abstinence and underage drinking with a group of their peers.

WKTC also airs socially mindful programming such as those dealing with living a green lifestyle, heart healthy initiatives -- such as the Go Red for Women heart series.

And for the past seven years, we have aired a show called Missing -- a 30-minute program highlighting missing children and adults from across the country.

In addition, WKTC dedicates half of its prime-time inventory solely to local businesses.

Perhaps it's because WKTC is viewed as somewhat of a small business that I want to help small businesses locally survive.

Many small businesses I have spoken with have stayed away from television advertising because of what they perceive to be a form of advertising that is just way too
expensive for them to even consider.

That's why we have put together an
advertising practice that half of our most
sought-after time slots will go to local
advertisers at rates which are affordable and
allows them to purchase greater frequency in
order to capture a larger audience.

A local advertiser will never be
preempted for a national advertiser; that is
our commitment to them.

Things are beginning to turn around
for the station.

We are seeing our best first quarter
in several years, our ratings are up, and there
is a lot to be optimistic about.

However, there’s always going to be
challenges.

Quite often, as a single station
owner, I feel as if I am playing a rich man's
game with no money.

Every day stations like WKTC face
the task of competing against the other
stations in the market, all owned by large
corporations.
The existing media ownership rules allow for at least somewhat of an even playing field.

Had the media ownership rules been relaxed a few years ago, it is very possible I would never have realized my dream of owning my own TV station.

I am all for free enterprise, but I worry that rolling back the ownership rules will make the single station owners a thing of the past.

I believe we need more diversity in media ownership.

Women and minorities make up a very, very small portion of TV and radio station ownership.

Why is that?

The NAB, The NAB Educational Foundation, and the FCC all support tax certificates as a way to increase ownership and that’s just one way that can assist in creating more diversity.

This year I was fortunate enough to be selected for the NAB Educational Foundation's Broadcast Leadership Training Program.
It is an intensive ten-month training workshop designed for senior-level broadcast managers looking to advance their career as group executives or station owners. It encourages diversity in broadcasting and takes a step-by-step approach on how to construct an acquisition.

I am in the class with 12 outstanding leaders in all facets of the media who are looking for their chance to break into station ownership. Each person comes from a very different background and has unique skill sets, and because of the thorough training we are receiving, I have no doubt that we will see many new owners emerge from this class.

In closing, consolidation I don’t believe is the answer; I believe innovation is the answer. While television stations today definitely need to think outside the box for new programming and revenue strategies in order to be profitable, it should not come at the expense of competition and
potentially squeezing out women, minority
and single-station owners.

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to be here.

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you very much.
Next we will hear from Donita Todd, the Vice-President and general manager of WIS Television in Columbia, South Carolina.

MS. TODD: Thank you.
And good afternoon to everyone.

Commissioner Clyburn, we are glad you are back here in Columbia with us.

My name is Donita Todd.
I'm privileged to be the Vice-President and general manager of the NBC affiliate, WIS-TV, right here in Columbia, South Carolina.

WIS is an important part of our community, having served the Midlands for over half a century.

We are part of the Raycom Media Group which owns or manages 44 television stations.

It is an honor for me today to share with you my experiences as leader of our
dedicated and hard-working team of broadcasters at WIS.

The past few years have been a period of unprecedented change in the broadcasting world.

The pace of change has continued to accelerate as -- just as the economic basis underlying our business has become more fragile.

But we continue to focus on our core mission of responsible local journalism and enthusiastic community service.

Let me give you just one example to set the stage:

Just like everyone in this room, we were shocked at the devastation in Haiti.

As soon as the disaster hit, we partnered with our local branch of the American Red Cross to do what we could do to help.

We ran live phone banks during our newscasts, provided live remote coverage of fund-raising efforts and concerts, and we worked with the Red Cross to give its efforts the visibility they needed to succeed.

In one week, together, we raised
more than $200,000 for those relief efforts.

The generosity of the Columbia community was overwhelming during that week.

But it didn't surprise us. We see it when we launch our annual blood drive, which we have done for the past eight years.

We see it on our signature community effort, the Families Helping Families program, in which WIS and the Palmetto Project helped more than 1,600 families this holiday season.

At WIS, we thrive on being a central part of our community.

One of our greatest and most unique contributions to the life of our community is the emergency journalism that we practice on a daily basis.

Our work involves not only important emergency alerts, but in-depth news and informational coverage that not only alerts our viewers to emergencies, but gives them the crucial information necessary in these times of need.

When we were recently hit with the largest snowfall in decades, locally we were
calling it "Snowmageddon," perhaps less than
the DC storm, but massive disruption by
Carolina standards, we launch a full-court
press that provided our viewers with the
actionable information that they needed to deal
with this emergency.

We used all of the resources of the
Raycom South Carolina stations to provide a
state-wide network of information.

We provided this comprehensive
coverage not only on our television channel,
but on our blogs, our mobile site and website.

As a matter of fact, we had more
than 500,000 page views that first day on
WISTV.com.

This is a role that is central to
us.

And it's a role where television
broadcasting is uniquely suited to serve our
communities.

You have asked us to focus on the
changes that have impacted our industry.

Well, broadcasting is a very
different business than it was just a few years
ago.
Where we once considered our goal to be broadcasting, we now consider it to be content casting.

We are using every new digital medium that we can to reach our viewers whenever, wherever and on whatever device they want to use.

I invite you to visit WIS's Facebook page -- and we love to have you as a fan -- or you could follow us on Twitter or check out our iPhone application or sign up for WIS alerts on your cell phone, or come to our website and comment on a story, or perhaps one of my editorials, or participate in a blog.

Or better yet, do what many of our viewers do, which is all of the above.

Our journalists are publishing not only on television, but on multiple media to many different types of audiences.

And our audiences are engaging us in a two-way conversation.

Just as we are working harder than ever to disseminate news, information and entertainment to the Midlands, building the advertising base that we rely on to fund those
efforts, has become more challenging.

Some of this change is cyclical, to be sure, and we are optimistic about our prospects as the economy improves.

But some of the change is more fundamental.

Our industry is becoming more competitive in many, many ways.

Not only do we compete with other television stations to sell advertising, we compete with local and national Internet sites, with local and national cable television channels, with radio, with newspapers and their websites, with outdoor advertising and with an array of new technologies.

We thrive on competition, and we expect that the new digital economy means that we will have new competitors emerging constantly.

We do hope that your rules and policies take account of the new competitive arena in which we operate.

If your ownership rules assume that we just compete with other broadcasters, please take account of our new reality.

We could benefit from increased
flexibility to structure our ownership, as we
do compete with new, completely unregulated
competitors.

We need to find new ways to continue
to fund the local journalism that is so central
to our mission.

Even as we tighten our belts at WIS
and downsize our budgets, we are working hard
to continue the amount and the quality of local
journalism that we bring to Columbia.

Even with so many outlets for
opinions and information, our journalism
matters.

We recently aired an investigative
report on fire safety that was triggered by an
anonymous tip to one of our journalists about
fire-safety violations; that led us to a deep
investigation of the fire inspection process
and possible malfeasance by those in charge of
that process.

As the investigation went on, the
fire chief resigned and fire safety issues at a
major local college were resolved.

Local journalism done by local
journalists who care about the community,
simply matters.

We are working hard to continue our
tradition of that community service.

We applaud your attention to our
efforts and your attention to our local issues,
as you can consider reforming your rules and
policies.

It means a lot to us that you have
come to Columbia.

And we hope that this fact-finding
effort is productive for you and your staff.

I appreciate the chance to talk to
all of you today.

And, again, I would be happy also to
respond to any questions you may have.

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you very much.

Finally, we will hear from
Dr. Barbara Zia, the President of the League of Women Voters
of South Carolina.

MS. ZIA: Good afternoon.

And thanks to the Commission for
inviting the League of Women Voters to take
part in discussing a topic that is of great
important to the League and to all the citizens
of South Carolina.
The mission of the League is to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in their government. But in order to become informed, we citizens have the right to be informed about public policy issues facing us, as well as the views of candidates among whom we will be choosing in an election on those issues.

The ability of candidates to communicate their views, and of the voting public to understand these positions, is basic to our democracy.

Our nation's airwaves are critical to making that happen.

In most phrases or sentences, it is the nouns that are the key words.

In this case, however, the adjectives used are of equal importance.

It is our democracy, and they are our airwaves.

We in the League hear over and over from citizens that they are hungry for unbiased information about where candidates stand on the issues.

They want more than the expensive
and oh-so-brief pieces of information that appear in 15- or 30-seconds spots that air on television.

This touches on a significant problem relating to the ability of candidates to share their views with the voting public, including the extraordinary costs associated with candidate communication.

Television is the major vehicle most Americans rely on for information.

But the skyrocketing costs for candidates to use that medium are a barrier to complete participation in the democratic process.

Those without large war chests are at a significant disadvantage.

And this disadvantage impacts everyone considering a run for public office, because of the huge sums of money required to do so.

So, what impact does this have? South Carolina ranks 50th nationally in the number of women elected to state or federal office.

The League is involved with programs
that teach the practical skills necessary for
women to run for office.

And what is the topic identified by
these women as being the biggest concern about
taking on a campaign for office?

It's the cost of the campaign and
the need, therefore, for them to spend an
inordinate amount of time in fund-raising.

In South Carolina, television
networks play a major role in creating space
for political discourse among candidates and
citizens.

In a state with a large rural
population, along with high levels of poverty
and unemployment, a large percentage of our
citizens rely on television networks for all
their news and information.

In fact, only about 63 percent of
people in our state have Internet access at
home.

That's the third lowest rate in the
nation.

Another projected 1.8 million households
in South Carolina in 2010, only about
half are cable television subscribers.
At the same time, readership is declining readership is forcing some South Carolina newspapers to cut their newsroom jobs. Although cable television and the Internet have made major inroads in our state, and many of us continue to depend on newspapers for our information, we recognize that they do not yet play the same role as the television networks in reaching the broadest spectrum of citizens.

Television and radio networks have been, and continue to be, partners of the League of Women Voters as we conduct public forums and candidate debates throughout our state.

We know from experience how critical the networks are to informing the electorate. And our research has shown that lack of information is a barrier to voting. Citizens tell us sometimes they don't feel they are informed enough to make the right decision.

They don't vote for fear of quote/unquote making the wrong decision. The League supports the requirement
for broadcasters to offer free air time that includes ads to qualifying candidates, particularly in the context of public financing of campaigns, as well as providing free air time for debates, interviews, issue statements and candidate profiles in the weeks leading up to elections.

This would open the political process to more candidates, provide citizens with more choices, more information, more power and reduce the role of special-interest money in politics.

Free air time for qualified candidates is a reality in democracies around the world -- with the exception of the United States.

The League of Women Voters has no position on media ownership per se; however, we are concerned about the dismally low levels of television station ownership by women and minorities.

At the same time, we in the League believe that television networks are our partners in making democracy work in South Carolina.
Increasing citizen access to our democratic processes, is a League issue, it's a citizen's issue, and it's a broadcasters issue.

Thank you very much.

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you very much for all your our outstanding statements.

We will now have some questions from PA, from the staff at the FCC, and then we will open it up to questions from the audience.

Would you like to begin, Sherrese?

MS. SMITH: Sure.

A lot of you talked already about -- kind of the state of the marketplace --

And I would like to really talk a little bit more about that.

One of the issues that we are seeing is whether the Internet is truly a replacement for broadcasting;

or whether it is really fragmenting news coverage and other things, such that it should be considered a replacement.

And I wanted to hear a little bit more from you all about that -- about the impact of the Internet on -- kind of -- your businesses.
MS. TODD: Well, I personally don't believe that the Internet is taking anything away. Actually, it's an enhancement. And, you know, as content providers, we are making the effort to, you know, make sure that our information, whether it's news or emergency information, is available to everyone on a platform that they want. I mean, we are an on-demand society. So, it's another extension of our core product, which is our television station. But we must provide that information, you know, on the platforms that the content user is looking to get that information. So, I'm not sure that it's taking anything away rather than enhancing the content.

MR. O'DELL: I don't think it is a replacement at all, I think that it's more fragmentation. One of the things we are talking about is also generational. You take any high school student and college student and ask them: Do they take the
morning paper today?
The answer is: No, they didn't.
How do they get their news?
Well, they may not even know.
Television is part of it, but the
Internet is certainly a huge part of it.
They are getting their news from --
hopefully -- WLTX.com.
But they are also getting it from
Google, from Yahoo, from their friends on Facebook
who have tagged or grabbed a link from
somewhere, and they have seen it that
way.
They are probably the most informed
generation that we have ever seen, but they are
getting it from so many different sources.
MS. SMITH: Okay.
MR. BENNETT: You talked about --
all of you, station managers and owners -- you
talked about the Internet for information
dissemination, but is it also a source of
income for you?
Television is a business. Has it
enhanced your income stream at all?
MS. TODD: I would say that a few
years ago the Internet -- we all used it
certainly as a promotional platform for our
core product -- but, you know, now we have
learned how to monetize the Internet.

It certainly is a very small
percentage of our overall revenue, but it's a
true revenue stream now.

And, again, we are trying to educate
advertisers, as well, to the value of it;
whereas, you know, in the past, I would say
five or ten years ago, it was pretty much a
value-added proposition.

Today it has real value, and there
are advertising opportunities.

And I think every advertiser or
media buyer or agency person is thinking about
it, certainly as an advertising venue.

So, we need to present -- and we
can't disregard mobile -- mobile is becoming
really huge.

And so, you know, every advertising
opportunity we present needs to have an on-air
component, an on-line component, as well as
pretty much a mobile component.

So, yeah.
It's a revenue stream. It's a small revenue stream, but it's continuing to grow.

MR. WALDMAN: In terms of the actual ad rates, I know that it's apples and oranges to compare with the way rates are calculated online versus on air.

In the newspaper business, there is a little bit of a saying now that: Dollars are being exchanged for dimes on the Internet.

What is the version of that for your station?

MS. TODD: Well, I think it's still an impressions-type buy.

We have gone from, you know, selling a banner ad, just as an exposure, to actually using metrics that are very measurable.

There are a lot of companies now that measure the number of people that come to your website;

the number of impressions generated by an ad;

the number of -- what we call click throughs, you know, where we can generate leads to that advertiser through their advertising on our website -- people can then link into theirs,
which generates real people into their boat.

So --

MR. WALDMAN: What are the rates

that you are able to secure for an online

visitor versus an on-air person in terms of

the --

MS. TODD: Well, the rates are much

lower than on-air rates.

But I'm not real comfortable talking

about rates, specifically.

MR. WALDMAN: I mean, in terms of --

not the actual numbers, but the online,

relative to the TV.

MS. TODD: Let me say it's a

fraction of on-air.

MR. WALDMAN: Okay.

I had a question for Mr. O'Dell --

or for anyone else who wants to chime in --

A number of you have said that you

have the strong desire to do local news and

information reporting, but you had financial

constraints, and had the hope that if the ownership rules

were looser that you would have a little more

flexibility.

Could you go into a little bit more
detail about -- what would a scenario look like
where, in your view, in your own station, where
relaxation of an ownership -- of the ownership
rules would enable you to do more or better
local news coverage?

MR. O'DELL: I'm not sure if my
station is the example, because I'm right now
doing a tremendous amount of local news, but I
can give you some examples around the country.

Our company owns a couple of places
where we have duopolies.

And where a station that we have
picked up as a secondary station, didn't do any
local news at all, they are now providing local
news service.

In fact, they are doing quite a bit
of local news service.

That's the kind of thing -- if we
are able to own more than one station in the
market, or, for example, the example I gave of
newspaper cross-ownership, newspapers, as you
know, are in trouble.

If we were able to own a newspaper
and a television station in the same market, I
think we could create something that would be
stronger and give the local community so much
more in-depth.

MS. SMITH: Can I ask a follow-up
question to that?

You talked about having shared
services agreement. I think a couple of you
may have mentioned that.

And I'm interested in how that plays
into kind of the ownership rules in general.

If you do have a shared services
agreement or an LMA that's working, does that
almost replace the need for a modification in
the ownership rules?

Or are you saying that you still
should be allowed to own more or do more, and
the services agreements don't necessarily help
for the bigger issue?

I would love to hear more that about
that.

MR. HUGGINS: Well, they do help.

Beginning in our market, as we were
talking about WWMB, because I was involved from
the very beginning.

And I knew the individuals that had
the license that were working so diligently to
put that station on the air.

And they had come to their last extension with the FCC -- there was just no way to get any capital together to fund it.

You got to realize at that time in our market, the total advertising expenditures trying to support four TV stations if that one had signed on was about $12 million.

And if there wasn’t even enough revenue projection there to pay the power bill.

When you laid it all out, it wouldn't work.

And what it allowed us to do was to say: Okay. If we take our resources, and you are still going to own it -- and they have been very active all along in, you know, how we programmed it -- I mean, literally, they were laughing at the beginning -- and for those of you from the beach and knew one of the original licensees down there, he said: I want TV down here so bad, we will just call it "Fish TV." I'll put up an aquarium, if you can help me get the picture on the air.

The expense was getting the equipment in place to transmit the picture.
And he said: I think people want more content -- and they do.

But ours is an example, you know, I can't comment on the - on going into ownership.

I know that the fees that are involved in ours, and there are additional fees when you have -- in our situation, like an LMA -- and for those of you, my joke has always been that: LMA, which is called a local marketing agreement, stands for lots of money for attorneys -- nothing against the attorneys here --

VOICE: Thank you.

MR. HUGGINS: The expense in going through that system to get it in place is a great deal. And it's a great deal of expense to maintain the reporting of everything we do.

But ours is an example of where a shared services agreement, time brokerage agreement, LMA, clearly has worked.

And we were the first one ever built from a start-up. That's how far we go back.

But the FCC at the time looked at it and said: If we don't allow these guys to pool resources in that small market, that channel
will go away.

But we are an example of where it did work.

MR. LAKE: I would like any of the panelists to give me your views on this question; that -- obviously, it's been different economic times for broadcasting stations.

I wonder if you -- after you look forward five years -- are we in a -- more of a cyclical downturn?

Or do you see permanent trends that will challenge the broadcasting business model on a long-term basis?

MR. O'DELL: I personally think -- I called it in my remarks -- a permanent reset, I believe that.

All these voices, all these -- the new media is not going away.

It's going to stay, and it's going to get even bigger.

So, the advertising pie is going to get split even more.

When you take a look at the advertising revenues -- a number of things that
we relied on have been consolidated themselves. Take the auto industry, for example, things like that. It's not ever going to come back the way it was.

So, we believe it's a permanent reset.

MS. SMITH: Other views? Thoughts?

MS. REIN: We have seen just -- I guess maybe just because we are such a small -- much smaller than some of the other stations -- that we have started to see some things turn around for us, just because we had seen a lot of it at the beginning, when the economy started to go down.

And we lost a bunch all of a sudden.

And so, we are starting to see a few things come back.

But that was kind of really the reason that we decided to put other programming on the sub-channels, because we could develop some other programming revenue in different ways.

And so, the multi-casting for us has
been the biggest way that we can, you know, get a little bit different revenue streams going and with the Spanish language, as well.

MR. BENNETT: I'm wondering, is it cost effective and money making to do the news and public affairs programming to the point that you don't ever see that going away in the stations like WIS and WLTX?

Or do you see sometime in the future where you’ll say: Well, this is just not worth to it us, and we are not doing any more local programming.

MR. O'DELL: We are committed to local news. No doubt about it.

We restructured the station to make it possible for us to do that.

In our company, we have centralized some things -- in the back office -- we call it.

I actually have more cameras on the street now than I ever have before.

We have put our emphasis into news generation, into -- into creating even more local news.

We are a content company.

Quite frankly, we are platform
agnostic.

It doesn't matter whether you get
our content over newspaper, television, your
mobile phone, via Twitter, via Facebook, or
any other thing out there, as long as it's our
content.

We have been in the content business
from the very beginning.

That's what our company has been
based on, and that's what we will continue to do.

That is our bread and butter; that
is our lifeblood.

MR. BENNETT: That's your money
maker.

I'm asking if it, indeed, it were no
longer a money maker, would you still be doing
news and public affairs programming.

MR. O'DELL: If it were no longer a
money maker?

I think we would find a way to
make it a money maker.

It's our core. It's who we are,

MR. HUGGINS: For us, in a small
market, like we are down in the Myrtle Beach and Florence
market, I can speak
for Jim Yeager, the president of our group,
which is why I enjoy working with him so much,
is that from day one, he said the same thing
Rich said, he said: We are in the public
service business. And the core to any TV
station success is its ability to provide local
news, weather, and sports.
And that is the single largest
dollar commitment that we have.
And we have even talked about the
fact that if you look at a news program that
may be actually costing you way more to produce
than it's generating, it still is the core and
the value of what your station stands for.
It's an investment in forward
equity.
And I don't think that anybody can
stay in the local broadcasting business today
and not understand that if they aren't taking
every resource they have available, and
figuring out ways to provide more local content
and programming, I don't think those
broadcasters will be around.

MR. WALDMAN: Was that always true?
Or is that more or less true than it used to be, given the competition you have for viewers' eyeballs with so many other choices?

Does that make news and information a tougher nut? Or a more of a differentiator?

MR. HUGGINS: I think it makes it tougher, because you're competing against more people.

But I think it has -- as everyone here has said -- we hold everybody accountable to be able to multi-task.

You're going to not just be reporting on air. You are rewriting it for the web;

you're preparing to get it out an text message to our viewers that subscribe to text;

and we are trying to make sure that we are multi-platformed, so that whoever our viewers and listeners and watchers are, that they have access to that information on a realtime basis.

And one of the things we were talking about in the break room before we came in -- one of our biggest concerns with the
things that are going on with the Internet --
and I know you all see it every day with the
Internet scams that go around -- we will see --
we have - and our newsroom is "first and accurate."
It used to say first/accurate.
We continually walk over and point
and say: Folks, it's not first, then
accurate. It's first and accurate. Make sure
the information is correct before you put it
out on any source we have.
I would rather be the first one with
accurate information than the first one with
just information.
And that's an ongoing problem we are
seeing with all this, you know, all the
different ways to get information out.
There is so much misinformation
going out, which is why we are doing the call-
in and the whole online educational thing this
month on the census.
There is so much misinformation out
there about the 2010 census.

MR. WALDMAN: What has been the
trend lines for you in terms of staffing for
local news?
MR. HUGGINS: For us, we are small, and we have always been small. We operate our news department with 17 people. 

And they are as -- I made the comment that just as the Clyburn family has had this continual calling for public service, anybody that comes to WPDE better have a calling for public service, because you're going to do a lot of work, and you are going to participate in this community. And it's, you know, we have always had a small staff.

MR. WALDMAN: What about WLTX?

MR. O'DELL: Well, I think our local news product is now more important than ever before. Because as everything is expanding, the one thing that keeps our identity is our local news.

The one thing that we can do that CBS, NBC, ABC, Fox cannot do, is provide local news and information here to Columbia, South Carolina.

It's absolutely the most important thing that we do.
MR. WALDMAN: How has the staffing changed over the last five years?

MR. O'DELL: Staffing, like I said earlier, we have reduced staffing in the station.

But we have reorganized, we have restructured, so the number of people in the newsroom has not gone down, like -- because of technology advances, cameras are so small now, anybody can carry a camera.

I have more cameras than I’ve ever had before.

MS. TODD: I would agree.

I mean, we at Raycom we were all asked to -- what we call reengineer our stations. And that means to really think and operate smarter with the resources that you have.

And we realized also particularly because of the geographic clusters that we have in Raycom, that we have a potential to create so much content and share it, for example, regionally.

In South Carolina -- or really our Southeast region is very, very strong with
stations in Savannah and Charleston and
Columbia and Wilmington and Myrtle Beach and
Charlotte.

And we created -- technology really
has made things very easy to, you know, operate
a little bit more efficiently with maybe the
same number of people, because you can do file-
based sharing --

And anyone in our company -- we have
a system called Oasis, which is a, you know, a
sharing system, where anyone -- any station in
our group can access content from any of the
other stations.

And as soon as it's put on that
server, they can put it on their air.

So, it's working smarter with the
resources that you do have, I think.

But we have had to add people to, you
know, populate our website.

So, you know, you might be
maintaining your photographers, reporters,
whatnot, but you might have to add a few people
to be web producers.

And, again, you have a lot of
monsters here you are trying to feed, you know,
with content.

So, it does require some other hands on deck.

But everyone has had to be cross-trained.

Twenty-six-year-old veterans in our newsroom have had to learn to edit, post to the web, skill sets that they just didn't come into that newsroom with.

And we are thankful to USC and the University of Georgia and a couple of other folks that we have worked with, with our interns that when they send somebody to us these days, that individual walks in the newspaper room knowing that they have to know how -- or have some experience and certainly the willingness to learn how to edit, shoot, write, produce.

We hired a young woman just recently who came from University of Georgia, and she produces a newscast, she reports, she posts to the web -- I mean, you know, everyone is multi-tasker these days.

MR. BENNETT: I was wondering,

Stefanie, for you, and you are listening to
these -- what are comparatively large stations
talk about their news programs -- how does that
affect what you do?

And how do you see your community
input, as compared to these news programs?

MS. REIN: Obviously, it’s not near as
much as they have.

But we do -- hopefully, in the next
18 months, we are looking to put together some sort
of a Spanish language newscast to be able to do on
Telemundo.

It probably won’t be a full-blown
newscast.

It might be something that, you
know, a couple of vignettes at the top of the
hour, and things like that, but something that
will get into the community -- specifically the
Hispanic community -- because that isn’t something that
is out there now, where the rest of our audience
does go to everybody else with their news.

MS. SMITH: Stefanie, you did talk a
lot about your commitment to the Hispanic
groups here in the state.

And I would love to hear from some
of the other broadcasters about what they are
doing on the stations to serve minority and
other diverse populations.

And has that changed at all with the
economic climate that we are in now?

MS. TODD: Well, just for WIS, our
Awareness Program is actually celebrating it's
40th anniversary this year.

And I don't think any rule changes
are going to impact, you know, that kind of
programming that resonates with minority
audiences.

But, you know, I think that every --
J.T. brought up a good point -- everything that we
do, all of our news and information
programming should be reflective of our
community.

I mean, it shouldn't just be
one-half a week or one hour a week that you
air.

It should be reflective in your
daily coverage plans.

MS. SMITH: Has there been any
change in the amount of coverage you are doing
because of kind of, you know, the hardships
that the industry is experiencing?
Or is it still continuing to go up?

Or what are you seeing?

MS. TODD: There hasn't been any change in the amount.

It's just the way that we are news gathering, the way that we are operating our newsroom, and, you know, just looking for those efficiencies and looking to work smarter and harder with fewer resources.

MR. WALDMAN: I had a question for Dr. Zia and Mr. McLawhorn -- you both talked about concerns that you have had, or desires that you have for certain issues to be covered better in the public sphere.

Can you put this in some historical context?

Do you think that the terms of the issues that you are concerned about -- let's say, you know, coverage of issues, like education or city services -- have things gotten better or worse in the last ten years?

MR. MC LAWHORN: Well, first of all, let me say, I think the broadcast industry has a commitment to be fair in its coverage.

But I think one of the things that
we are aware of, many of the people who work in
the industry see things from their own
perspectives; and, therefore, I think it's not
so much what is covered, but what is not
covered is really very significant.

For example, The Urban League
celebrates Black History Month by recognizing
over 800 African-American achievers; we have
done it for 25 years.

We celebrate this history to send a
message to African-Americans that achievement
matters.

And it's always very, very
challenging, in trying to get coverage of that
event, because we think it's really important
for young people to see themselves not as gang
bangers, but also to see themselves in other
roles.

And so, I think that -- I think, you
know, you see things from your own
perspective.

And in my published comments, I
talked about the vetting process of those
people working in the newsroom.

I think, quite often, people just
really don't get it.

They don't really know what's going on.

And I think there have been efforts in our community with our broadcasters to have dialogue -- we have constant dialogue with all the station owners.

It's a process that is evolving, and it's a work-in-progress.

But I do think that, you know, when we talk with African-American people -- and I asked many of them before coming here today for the past several weeks: What do you think about how African-Americans are portrayed?

And I can tell you 90 percent of the people I saw and talked with, the feedback I got -- and whether or not the persons were unemployed or had a Ph.D. or whatever their socio-economic status may have been, the common theme was that: We are not projected in totality. We are stereotyped too often.

And I made a reference before, I was out of town and someone said: I didn't know you all had a gang problem in Columbia, South Carolina. You got a black gang problem here.
They had seen the History station program somewhere else.

I live in this community. I serve communion at Dalzell Gardens, and I never had the idea that my life was at risk.

I go there, walk around freely. I don't look behind me.

And so, outside of the community, people see these kinds of things.

It would have been interesting for them to show other positive things that were going on in Columbia, South Carolina.

We have a large percentage of African-American people here.

And we have an excellent opportunity to display African-Americans in more of a total process in Columbia, South Carolina.

But I want to acknowledge that we have made a lot of progress.

And every time I talk with media representatives and the broadcasters, they are very, very receptive to try to move this agenda forward.

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you.

Dr. Zia, what about the issues
concerned; has it gotten better or worse?

MS. ZIA: I think -- I think that
the local news coverage is thin in terms of --
or if -- there is not as much depth to it as
there needs to be.

And if you figure, you know, a
station has a half hour or 60 minutes to cover
the traffic report and weather several times
and sports and then throw in the local
political news of the day -- I mean, unless
it's something like a politician is missing --

(Laughter)

-- it doesn't get a whole lot of
coverage.

MR. WALDMAN: How often do you get
that?

MS. ZIA: Too often. We’ve heard
enough of that.

But, I applaud South Carolina
Educational Television for the work that they
do with The Big Picture, which is really an
exceptional, in-depth -- really the only thing
I think on television, that I know of, I live
in the Charleston market, and there's
certainly nothing there of that caliber -- but
the in-depth look about what is happening at
the State House on issues that really -- South
Carolinians need to understand, because we are
going to have to vote to -- for people to
represent us on these issues.

MR. BENNETT: As well as a

representative of ETV, I thank you for that

comment.

But also, I wonder -- when you
talked about not getting advertising dollars
for political campaigns, I saw -- or I thought
I saw a cringe from commercial television

folk.

How realistic is that, asking that

political folk not be made to pay for their

spots on television?

MR. WALDMAN: Are you okay with

doing that?

MR. HUGGINS: Well, I will speak for

our market.

And I would like to address two of
the issues that were brought up.

If you come into our newsroom, I
agree with everything you said. There needs to
be a balance.
And years ago, we completely sat down, when I moved back into the market, and our executive producer, who runs our news operation, is a minority male who grew up outside of Charlotte.

Our bureau chief that runs all of our news for the Pee Dee is Tonya Brown, and to me one of the greatest stars in this industry and a product of The United Negro College Fund; and our news director is a female.

So, trust me, white males are a minority in that newsroom.

And they run that operation, and I think do a great job of balancing it.

And in our market, you just need to move from Charleston and move up to Myrtle Beach and Florence.

We make darn sure we have -- we televise a debate for any office that is out there, whether it's a county seat, or a statewide seat, we do debates every year in detail.

We do them -- not just for the general election -- but we do them for the primary.
We do that weekly show, where we
give every single candidate a long format.

What we do regularly is, we come up
to Columbia and do five minutes with each of
our elected officials, that airs -- the five-
minute segment airs every week to talk about the
things that are coming up.

When we do our long form, it is 20
minutes.

So, every single candidate running
for election -- doesn't matter how much money
you have or don't have -- we invite you in, and
we air it on Sunday mornings coming out of Good
Morning America, so it has a huge audience and
has, in fact, it is one of our highest-rated
programs.

And it's because we want to make
sure people are informed.

My biggest frustration is the
comment you made earlier when you said somebody tells
you they didn't vote because they didn't want
to make a mistake.

As a political science major and
business minor, that just makes my stomach
hurt, that we have people that are scared to go
cast a ballot, because they don't want to make
the wrong decision.

So -- that's what we are doing.

And the question on the other side
is: If you allow political candidates to have
free advertising -- my question is has always
been: They are already guaranteed the lowest
unit rate made available for any political
candidate on our air, well below our regular
advertisers, and my concern has always been:
How do you draw the line of what -- how much
air time is donated to that advertiser?

And one of the big things we get
during the election period is: If I have to
see another candidate ad, I'm going to scream
from viewers.

And I see people nodding, so that's
what -- we want to make sure we provide a lot
of long format content for our residents of
our area to know what each candidate really
stands for, so they can really --

And we take viewer questions in for
them for that format.

So, we will have a whole list of
questions that our viewers have sent in that
they want asked of that candidate.

So, that's what we are doing.

MR. O'DELL: WLTX, for the last four years, every candidate for office has offered time on the website, we bring them in, we do an extended interview, ten- to 15-minute interview, that then lives on the website for the entire duration of the campaign.

That interview is then excerpted, and parts of it are run in our seven o'clock news and other newscasts, but it's all free, and every candidate is invited in, and we promote the fact that that's available.

MR. LAKE: I would like to ask each of our broadcaster panelists, as you plan to carry your stations forward for the next, say, five years, against the backdrop of our ownerships rules, if you could make one single change in our ownership rules, to make it better for your businesses, what would that be? Or either loosening the rules or tightening the rules?

Or do we have the rules exactly right?

Start with you.

MR. HUGGINS: I would just ask, and
since Congressman Clyburn, whenever Commissioner Clyburn was appointed, and we had already been talking to the Congressman about some the issues in our market, we know that the broad rules -- you have to have a starting point -- but we have got situations in our market where there are existing FCC rules that have nothing to do with ownership, but there are rules that were set up prior to community stations signing on the air are blocking free competition just among TV stations -- that's another whole issue for another day.

So, our point has been that there is a huge diversity of voice out there.

I think that in every market, you need to be able to look at that market and make a decision.

Because ours is an example where if you had not allowed an LMA or shared services, or whatever you may want to call it now, you would not have diversity. We would have lost a channel there; there's just not enough resources to support it.

So, I would ask that you continue to review the rules and open those rules up where
it makes sense for shared services, cross-ownership, whatever makes it work for that market, because I don't think it's an all size fits; I really don't.

MR. O'DELL: I think that the FCC wants what broadcasters want, and we want strong ownership, strong community service, strong television stations.

I would ask that we look at the ownership rules and make determinations based on the landscape of today, rather than the landscape of the early 1970s.

Please consider all the voices that are out there, and don't take television and put it in a little box and say: Okay. We are going to regulate this industry without looking at all of the other voices that are out there.

Don't put us in a vacuum. Consider everything that is out there, and then make the rules fit today.

MR. WALDMAN: I don't want to make you do our jobs for us, but can you be even more specific about what that would look like?

MR. O'DELL: I believe that you need to look at the voices rule, because if you say
that a certain thing can't happen because there's only eight voices -- and there's not really eight voices -- I can contend that there are certainly many more voices that are out there.

Here in Columbia, for instance, a great deal of political news is not made only from the newspaper and the regular television stations, you have political bloggers that are driving some of the news in this town.

And that is a voice, that is a very influential voice.

And I think that's one of the things you really need to look at is -- please consider all of the voices that are out there.

MS. TODD: Sort of on that same note, the cross-ownership, for the mere survival of some print publications or broadcast television stations, I know sometimes it makes sense.

I just -- I don't think it's a one-size-fits-all world that we live in anymore.

I think there's nothing comparable between, you know, the New York market and the Columbia market, in terms of numbers of voices
or opportunities, you know, for cross-

ownership.

Again, I think, just flexibility, it

has to be an era of flexibility that responds
to the marketplace in which we are competing.

So it's -- whether it's number of

voices, new technologies, you know, the women

and the minority ownership issue -- I mean, I

love this woman.

I know maybe a handful of women

broadcasters--

and I have been in this business a

long, long time, you know--who actually own

their stations.

And you are probably going to hear

this from the radio panel, as well, but in

today's financial market, even for an

established traditional group owner, to get

financing for a station or an acquisition or,

you know, is just a humongous chore.

So, I don't know how that lends

itself to new-entry ownership.

I would imagine that would be

extremely tough.

So, I think you really do have to
entertain very creative business plans to
allow, certainly, for minority and female
ownership, to allow for new-entry ownership,
and sometimes, you know, cross-ownership might,
you know, facilitate that process.

I think it's just a case-by-case
situation.

But, certainly, flexibility.

Certainly, you know, entertain the
new environment that, you know, is so different
than 35 years ago when these ownership rules --

MS. REIN: I would like to see more
opportunities also for women and minorities--

And like the gentleman from The
Urban League was saying, I would like to see
broadcasting in each marketplace be reflective
in the ownership of that market.

You know, to get more voices, I
think when you start to cut down the number of
voices, whether it's newscasting or -- and I
agree, there are a number of voices out there
with the web and bloggers and things like
that.

But I think the traditional
ownership structure, I think, needs to be
reflective of the community that's there.

And so, I would like to see more opportunities being given to minorities and women, and to -- in some markets, it may make sense to do some consolidation, things like that.

But I think on a case-by-case basis, where there's opportunities where other people can get in the ownership, we need to foster that.

MR. WALDMAN: I'm curious -- if some of the other broadcasters wanted to respond to Ms. Rein's concern that she expressed earlier, that loosening the ownership rules might make it harder for new entries, especially women and minorities.

MR. HUGGINS: You are talking about the ownership rules -- and I go back to the LMA shared service agreement or whatever -- I think it would actually help them get stations on the air that otherwise would not be.

And on all those agreements, you know, they have a term, you know, they don't automatically renew.

So, if it would allow someone to go
into a market and find a license and get that license station up and running, and build it to a value, then it may, at some point, could stand on its own; or it may, in turn, not.

I think with this -- with the environment we live in, both from a -- I think somebody made the comment it's so hard to get financing now -- I think we have got to be creative and flexible, I really do.

And I was listening to all of the things that she went through, and she was in Columbia, which is one of our largest markets, where there is revenue, you know.

You have both the support of the university and state government and industry.

As you all know, when you come to the beach, we're solely based on the service industry and tourism. Tourism is down, we suffer.

We want everybody to come to Myrtle Beach for vacation this summer.

(Laughter)

MR. WALDMAN: Mr. O'Dell, do you have a comment?

MR. O'DELL: I think Stefanie is a great example of what can be done.
Our company is absolutely in favor of minority ownership, female ownership, and we support that absolutely.

I just think that from our point of view, the rules, again, need to be reflective of what's current today.

MS. SMITH: A number of you talked about a case-by-case approach.

And what I would love to hear from each of you is what facts should we look at -- what should we consider if we did do a case-by-case approach, rather than a bright-line rule.

I'll start on that end.

MS. ZIA: I'm not a broadcaster.

MS. SMITH: I still think that it would be interesting to hear from all of you, if you have any thoughts.

MS. ZIA: I think I will pass. If something occurs to me, I will, at the end, I will tag on.

MS. TODD: So, you are saying on a case-by-case -- someone is applying for a license? Or --

MS. SMITH: Well, right now, our rules currently -- there's some bright lines,
and there are other factors that we consider. But a lot of you have said that we need to think about flexibility; that we need to think about the market. And so, if we decided to go that route, what factors do you think we should look at? What do you think is most important to those decisions, as it relates to ownership? MS. TODD: Well, I think I would start with looking at the market, you know, itself, how many stations does it support, you know? What is the financial underfooting, you know? Can the marketplace support another business? Because the last thing you want to do is put someone in business and have them go dark. So, I would want to make sure that the business plan certainly was there. And then I would certainly want to know what diversity or what new voice or new
opportunity does this represent.

So, perhaps, it's just introducing a new minority, you know, a minority or new-entry owner into the marketplace, which is always good for competition, always stirs things up, gives it fresh new approach.

So, I would look for that diversity, whether it is ethnicity or product programming -- what is it going to bring to the marketplace that it doesn't already exist there.

If it's just another, you know, business opportunity and -- where really doesn't have a good sound, I think, content plan, that would, you know, give me pause.

But I really think, you know, so what content is it bringing to the party?

You know, is there the financial underpinning to support a station?

Does that station have, you know -- I guess I would say a community mission?

You know, what are they going to do to serve that community?

Does it allow more news?

You know, we talk about -- and adding more and more newscasts into the
market -- and there's a financial
consideration, because we all sell news on a --
what's called a cost-per-point basis.
The more points you put into the
market the less you can sell it for.
But, again, if it's advancing, you
know, news and information in the market, it's
still a good thing.
So, those are, I guess, just off the
top of my head -- some of the things I would
look at.

MS. SMITH: Stefanie?

MS. REIN: I think market size
probably -- the things that might work in New
York probably aren't going to work in
Wilmington, North Carolina.
See who the other players in the
market are; if there is going to be some
consolidation there, what -- how is that going
to change the landscape of who's already there.
And I think maybe just those of
you -- the -- few of the key things I would
look at first, where everybody is located and
who is in the market.

MR. O'DELL: I think doing a market-
by-market might put you in a quagmire of time

that you would never be able to get out of.

But if you were going to do it, I

think --

MS. SMITH: Our staff doesn't like

quagmires.

MR. O'DELL: You know, I think you

have to evaluate the strength of the entities in

the market.

You need to take a look at that. If

you are talking cross-ownership you need to

take a look at the television station and

newspaper, or newspapers -- what is the

strength? What can be gained from it?

But I think doing it on a market-by-

market basis, you're asking for lots and lots

and lots of time that you would ever be able to

get through.

MR. HUGGINS: Since I was involved

in that original LMA, what we talked about was

not just look at the households in the market

but look at the retail sales by category.

Because you have got to go beyond

just bodies.

What are the retail sales?
And then by category, because some categories do support advertising, some don't.

And if you break that down, you come up with what I call the advertising universe, and from that, what opportunity is there in revenue?

And -- because I think a lot of times we get caught up in households -- and I tell everybody: I never had a house drive up anywhere and buy a single thing.

We have to go deeper than the household and look at the population and retail sales and do it by category.

And I think that gives you a much more realistic example of whether the market is healthy and what it can and can't support.

MR. WALDMAN: Thank you very much.

We are going now turn it over to the audience.

MR. LAKE: Yes.

Thank you, all of the panelists, for a very stimulating discussion.

As we transition to the public comments, I'm happy to recognize a small number of individuals whom we have invited to speak
for just a few minutes

at this point, in order to keep the
panel to a manageable size.

And the first of those individuals
is Scott Garrett, Communications Director of
Harvest Hope Food Bank.

If you would like to approach the
microphone there. That's fine?

MR. GARRETT: Thank you.

First, I want to thank the media
ownership field workshop for giving Harvest
Hope the opportunity to take just a few minutes
to talk a little bit about what a media
relationship and partnership means to us.

My name is Scott Garrett, and I am
Communications Director for the Harvest Hope
Food Bank.

Throughout the year, the majority of
our most successful fund-raising events and
food drives are built around and predicated
upon a relationship with the media.

Having a media partner that works
with us for a large food drive and fund-raising
event.

And this does amazing things for
Not only through that event do we generate thousands of pounds of food to dispense to hungry people, we also bring in thousands of dollars to help us with our operating costs and to purchase food for people.

But above and beyond that, it grants us media exposure and helps with our outreach to the community, to let the community know about us and what we do.

And some of these events are day-long events, and I would like to thank some of the members of the media, some of the television stations to make sure that we are up at 4:30 in the morning to work these events.

But throughout the day-long event, we are granted media exposure, which is something that money just can't buy, to let the community know about us.

Above and beyond that, from a broader perspective, it's a win/win situation for ourselves and that media sponsor, that individual television station, because they are showing that they are a community partner, that
they have concern for organizations in the community, that work for the betterment of the community and people in the community. 

So, it really works both ways. It helps promote us, promote our mission and it helps to generate a large amount of funding and food and brings in donations.

It gets our mission out there and our outreach out there, and it promotes that media partner, as well.

So, it is a win/win situation for everybody.

MR. LAKE: Thank you very much.

Next, we will hear from Darci Strickland, who is guardian ad litem and ambassador for March of Dimes, a member of Delta Sigma Theta public service sorority and anchor at WLTX-TV.

MS. STRICKLAND: Good afternoon.

I have been asked to repeat my name one more time, it's Darci Strickland, D-a-r-c-i.

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen:
It is indeed an honor and a privilege to stand before you, not only speaking as a member of the media, but most importantly representing the wonderful people of the Midlands.

I'm originally from a small town outside of Charleston, about 100 miles from here, but I have spent my entire adult life in the Midlands.

I graduated from the University of South Carolina in 1997 and immediately secured employment at WLTX.

Since that time, I have made it my business to be as active and involved in the community as possible.

And I have been afforded opportunities that I may not have had, if I were not an employee of WLTX.

I know without a doubt, that my responsibility as a main anchor is not over when the tally light goes off or when I leave the station.

Quite to the contrary, the majority of my work is done when I'm not on the air.

Not a day goes by when I'm not
approached by a viewer with a request to
fulfill the station brand and be On Your Side.

It's a request that I am happy to
fill, because it means that it's not just
something we say, it really is a way of life at
WLTX.

We are On Your Side weekly, if not
daily, with phone banks staffed with experts
that allow our viewers to cut out the middleman
and get answers immediately to anything from
unemployment benefits to the new credit card
laws that went into effect yesterday.

The On Your Side brand is alive
every day at 5 p.m. when Andrea, Mike and I have
an opportunity to communicate directly with
viewers during Friends @ 5.

Just yesterday, they spoke one on
one with Commissioner Clyburn; and two weeks
ago, our State's First Lady answered questions
from the viewers who wanted to know how she
managed to handle the Governor's affair.

I feel like a kid at Christmas every
time we have a new person try the chat, and
they realize that they really are talking to
Darci and Andrea.
We are On Your Side on the 19th of every month when we stress the importance of monthly breast self-exams or we talk about the horrible reality of premature birth, and how too many babies are born too small and too soon.

I know first-hand as a mother of three healthy children, what most of our viewers going through every day, and I do my best to give them hints and tips, and I take those hints and tips in return to get through my day.

I feel so blessed to have the management that we do at WLTX, that allows us to speak directly to our viewers about their concerns, and then take those concerns to the public and try to make a change.

Two minutes is really a modest amount of time.

I could have used this time to talk about how it feels to win Emmys or about being this year's TV Personality of the Year, but you all know as well as I do that those are things that are just listed on a resume, and what we do for others far outlives anything we can add to our
personal good.

I believe the work that WLTX does in the community daily, will continue long after people have forgotten who I am, what I won, or why I chose journalism as a career.

And, quite honestly, that's going to be just fine with me,
as long as they continue to believe that News 19 is, and always will be, On Your Side. Thank you.

MR. LAKE: Thank you very much.

Now, we will hear from Margaret Frierson, Executive Director for South Carolina of the National Center of Missing and Exploited Children and Chairperson of the South Carolina Amber Alert Oversight Committee.

MS. FRIERSON: Good afternoon. My name is Margaret Frierson, and I serve as Executive Director of the South Carolina Branch of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

We are headquartered in Alexandria, Virginia, but we are just one of seven branch offices located across this country.
Created in 1984 by Congress, the National Center is a private, non-profit that serves to assist families and parents of missing children, and to serve as a national leader on preventing child victimization.

Our partnership with our media friends across South Carolina has been long serving.

Probably one that is most visible to the public and the communities we serve is the South Carolina Amber Alert Program.

Launched in November 2002, the Amber Alert Program is a private partnership between members of the media, our state transportation department, to assist law enforcement in critical missing child cases.

Key case information is provided to our public via changeable message signs along our highways and is broadcast throughout our media outlets statewide.

What is so unique about Amber is that we rely on the eyes and ears of the public.

It is not the great work of law enforcement, it is not the great work of the
National Center, it is our friends and family out there paying attention, making a difference and making that call.

Our television viewers, our radio listeners and our motorists are provided with key information about the missing child, the suspect, and any vehicle information we may have, so that they can make that call and help law enforcement recover that child.

Our successes have been many. To date, we have issued 36 Amber Alerts in the State of South Carolina, and have successfully recovered 45 children.

So, it does work.

And I would like to thank our media partners for stepping up to this initiative, making a difference, and making a change in the lives of South Carolina's smallest citizens.

Thank you.

MR. LAKE: Thank you very much.

And now we are very happy to open the microphones.

I would like to invite anyone who would like to make a brief comment or ask a
question of one of our panelists to line up at
one of the microphones in the aisles.

We ask you to limit your comments or
questions to two minutes, please.

And please state your name and any
affiliation when you begin.

Thank you and welcome.

MS. RICHARDSON: I so enjoyed
the meeting and to attend the session today.

My granddaughter is from Charlotte,
North Carolina, and she invited me because she
knows this is an area that I'm very interested
in.

I have a question here that I need
to direct to one of the FCC members, either the
Commissioner or Mr. Steve Waldman.

Since we have been discussing media ownership and
the
change of the landscape of media television, I
want to inquire as to whether the FCC is going
to be specifically addressing the discrepancy
in minority media ownership.

Recently, 23 minority and civil
rights organizations filed an open letter to
Chairman Genachowski, pointing out that
minority TV ownership is down 50 percent since
1999, and minority radio ownership is down nine percent since 2007.

My question is:

Will this letter -- or is this letter being concerned -- being addressed?

And if not, why?

And if so, how? Commissioner or either Mr. Waldman.

My name is Viola Richardson; lifetime member of the NAACP.

MS. SMITH: I guess as the Chairman's legal advisor, it probably would be best for me to address this issue.

Clearly, and I can tell you personally, Chairman Genachowski is extremely concerned about these issues.

And he has appointed Tom Reed who is a head of OCBO -- I can never remember what it exactly stands for, but he -- his office handles a lot of issues related to minority and women initiatives.

He's currently looking at the wide array of suggestions that were put forth by both the 23 organizations that you talked about, as well as our diversity advisory
committee that we have at the FCC.

I'm sure you're aware, since you
seem to be very in tune with these, that there
are a lot of suggestions, a lot of great ideas
that have been put forth.

And while it seems sometimes that we
have been there much longer than our seven
months, we are, you know, still kind of getting
through the number of suggestions to make sure
that we are very thoughtful about this and that
we are very careful about any decisions that we
make.

But we are in the process of
addressing a lot of these issues.

And we will be reporting about some
of these in the near future.

MS. RICHARDSON: Thank you.

I have a follow-up question, if I
may -- very short.

MS. SMITH: Go ahead.

MS. RICHARDSON: There has been much
discussion around net regulations at the FCC.

My question is:

Can you explain why the debate over
net neutrality takes precedence over the task
of insuring all Americans actually have more diverse
voices in radio and TV first?

MS. SMITH: I guess I'll take that
one as well.

I would say that it does not take
precedence.

I mean, one of the things that we
did, which, I think, has been very unique from
other media ownership hearings, is that we
started this process very early in the game.

Like I said, we have only been there
seven months, and it was October or November we
had, basically, three days of hearings to
talk about these very issues.

And one of the days we focused a lot
on, as you related, to minority and women --
both in ownership, diversity of content, etc.

So, I would argue that, you know, we
are very committed to it, and we are thinking
about it as important as net neutrality, broad
band plan and other things, and we hope
that you will be patient with us as we go
through the next year of this process, and that
the ultimate outcome will, you know, indicate
to you how important these issues are to us.
MR. WALDMAN: I would like to add one thing, which is that -- preserving an open Internet is crucially important to insuring that there are many different voices in the communications sphere. I don't think these issues are at odds with each other. They are both extremely important for that issue, including the open Internet rule.

MS. SMITH: And broadband, as well.

We do multi-task at the FCC, but I want to make sure everybody understands these issues.

MS. RICHARDSON: Thank you very much for giving me the opportunity to express this question.

MR. LAKE: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER CLYBURN: If I could be a little rude.

I was going to add to that, it's the Office of Economic Opportunity -- Business Opportunity -- the C is kind of -- we are all getting to know each other.

It is an agency of about 1,700 odd hundred persons, and we are getting
to know.

And Sherrese is from South Carolina, didn’t give her a plug.

But I want to -- the numbers, as you mentioned, are troubling.

When you talk about -- just looking at some stats that I want to throw out to reassure you that my office, the Chairman's office, we are all concerned about diversity in ownership and what that means in terms of the entire landscape.

It was hinted to, but women own six percent of the commercial broadcast TV stations in this nation.

And people of color own three percent.

And that number, since 1998, has dropped nearly 70 percent.

So, those are issues that have our attention.

Those are issues that we are going to speak about.

We have a Diversity Committee that has been reinvigorated; that is engaged and has put forth a number of proposals that deal with
the issues that you put forth, that these
offices -- the -- all of the offices -- are
taking very seriously and will do what we can.

The challenge -- a part of the
challenge is our legal landscape.

Some of the things that we could
proactively do a few years ago, we just cannot,
because of some of the cases that most people
in this audience, you know, would know about.

So, we are going to have to be
really creative.

And when we come up with pathways
and pronouncements, it has to be upheld in the
courts.

So, unfortunately, things are moving
slowly.

And some of the -- we feel
passionate about things -- about these issues
but it's moving a bit slower because of these
challenges.

We know we have these challenges.

We don't want to give anybody any
false hopes.

When we come up with something, we
know in our hearts is the right thing to do,
but the courts turn us down.

So, as Sherrese mentioned, be patient with us.

You have people committed to changing the landscape, the marketplace, and to insure that more voices are heard, and that all owners, regardless of platform, are given the opportunity to excel.

MR. LAKE: Thank you very much.

COMMISSIONER CLYBURN: Thank you.

MR. LAKE: Thank you very much.

MR. JENKINS: I'm Mel Jenkins, I'm a former radio news person, which means that I'm unemployed, basically.

And, essentially, I'm working with environmental and civic activities here in the Columbia area.

I'm glad that you are here. This has been an interesting event.

I'm primarily interested in radio, naturally.

Television is sort of extra out there; they put pictures with sound.

I think there are some potential
ideas that can come out of this.

You talked about case-by-case and
that means community by community.

And if you start going in that
direction, I think you need more community
involvement.

I would like to issue a challenge to
Ms. Bennett, that South Carolina Educational
Television is in it's 50th year, as I see
occasionally, and that it is an ideal medium to
bring together discussion about the evolution
of the FCC, which is something near and dear to
my heart, because it's evolved in some ways
that it was not set up to evolve.

I can go all the way back and talk about
the Blue Book in the 1940s and on back through
that.

The idea where radio licenses were
given out as a service goal, not just
competition and diversity, but also to provide
service to the community.

So, these are all issues that I
think we need to look at.

And I will try to have some more
concise thoughts as I get on into the evening.
I plan to come back and talk radio. What we do need to do when we look with TV, though, we don't need more consolidated ownership, we need more diverse ownership, we need to look at Low Power TV and keep those independent, and we need to not let those go into the ownership of other regular TV stations and into special-interest groups.

We need more voices out there, not consolidation of voices.

Thank you.

MR. LAKE: Thank you very much.

I should add that all these proceedings are being webcast live, so we are very happy to hear your comments, and you are also being heard by our webcast audience.

MR. WILLIS: Thank you.

I'm Mike Willis with Lake Murray Broadcasting, an incorporated non-profit organization registered with the State of South Carolina.

My comments are probably more appropriate for tonight's session, when you are focusing on radio, but I cannot be here
tonight, so I ask to you indulge me for just a
moment here.

I'm here to speak in favor of local
broadcast ownership through additional Low Power
FM radio stations and in support of the Local
Community Radio Act.

LPFMs provide an important public
service to local communities.

These stations offer urban, rural
and suburban areas alike, a public forum and a
means by which to share and exchange important
community information.

LPFM radio, unlike many commercial
radio stations today, is produced, owned and
operated by people who actually live and work
in the community.

I do want to thank members of South
Carolina's Congressional delegation who have,
thus far, supported the passage of the Local
Community Radio Act, and also urge South
Carolina's U.S. Senators to also support this
important and needed regulation.

Senator Jim DeMint has not yet given
his support to the legislation.

And we do need his help to pass the
bill this spring. We are asking Senator DeMint to pass the bill to give citizens access to the airwaves through this important Low Power radio service. Also, at the appropriate time, I would urge the FCC to offer additional LPFM public filing opportunities. In discussions I have had so far with the FCC, my understanding is that after the act passes, there will still be ten months to a year before we are able to apply, through any filing opportunity. Groups such as Lake Murray broadcasting, we don't -- we don't need a year to prepare. We are ready to go. So, as soon as the legislation passes, we would like the opportunity to file right away. Groups such as Lake Murray Broadcasting are ready to offer local programming, such as local news and events, coverage of high school athletics; also Lake Murray weather and boating conditions;
and also regular discussions with local elected officials.

So, thank you for your time.

And, again, I ask you to support local ownership through the LPFM radio service.

Thank you.

MR. LAKE: Thank you very much.

MR. WALDMAN: Before you speak -- I'm sorry -- I just wanted to mention that at the FCC, in addition to the media ownership proceeding, there is another project on the Future of Media and the information needs of communities that is ongoing, that will be looking at some of these same issues, but beyond the ownership issues, including the public interest obligation, Low Power FM and things like that.

You can learn more about that and how you could add your comments to that proceeding if you go to FCC.gov/futureofmedia.

MR. SMITH: Good afternoon.

My name is Keith Smith.

I am currently general manager of Lorrick Communications, which is a small radio
broadcast group.

But for most of my career, I have been in broadcast, television -- local television, for both big groups as well as minority broadcasters.

So, my comment or question is more along the lines of addressing minority ownership, as well as the area of media ownership.

I think I would like to offer a possible idea or suggestion that maybe some of these bigger broadcast groups can get either waiver or points towards a waiver by providing some assistance to women or minority-owned businesses.

For example, I know that Stefanie's station, she may not have the resources to provide a local newscast.

But when I was in this market before, and I worked at WIS, I remember we used to produce the news for the local Fox station.

Now, there was, you know, they paid for it, but still, maybe if a bigger station group had a station in the market where they provide engineering services or some other type
of shared services to a small women or minority
owned broadcaster, that then they could earn
points that the big station group could use
when they wanted to go into a market where
maybe there was a cap or some limitations on
why they could not expand in that market.
    I think I just want to offer that
suggestion.

MR. LAKE: Thank you.
That's a very interesting suggestion.
Welcome.

MR. HAYES: Thank you.
I'm Mike Hayes, I'm the President
and general manager of Hearst Television
property in Greenville, South Carolina.
    I just came down today for the
proceeding.
    And I wanted to first say thank you
to all of my colleagues. You all did a fantastic
job today -- better you than me -- nicely done.
    I wanted to actually underscore the
question asked by Mr. Waldman, and just offer
an additional comment and actually kind of tag
onto what Rich said --
    The question was: Does the local
news and community service -- is that more or
less a differentiator in the world of more
voices.

Actually, I think as the world kind
of proliferates with the world of however many
channels today and the Internet, it's actually
the only point of difference.

You know, it's all that we have
left.

You know, Rich said CBS, NBC, Fox,
CNN, whatever, and then everybody with a cell
phone or whatever as Donita said, it's what we
have that makes us special.

It's why people come to us on whatever
platform-agnostic piece of distribution we have,
that is who we are, that is what our identity is.

And that's why we are special and why we
do all the things that we do and what Billy does and
what Rich does.

And so, that's why we continue to
make a difference in peoples' lives today.

So, anyway, that's my comment and
thank you for doing what all you did today up
there.

And I just wanted to show you,
Mr. McLawhorn, I'm the incoming President of the Urban League. I have my Urban League cufflinks on today.

(Laughter)

MR. LAKE: Thank you for that comment and that demonstration.

MR. MOKIPSY: Good afternoon.

My name is Gerard Mokipsy.

And I feel kind of strange in here today, because I'm the publisher of a newspaper --

(Laughter)

-- but in spite of that, I just found out about LPFMs not so long ago.

And I think it's a very good idea.

I live in a community, and I know some of the people on the panel -- and I live in a community called the Gullah Community.

And I some know some of you may have heard of that and some of you may not. It's called the Gullah Community.

And it's a community that is almost like a kind of a dying culture.

And after hearing about LPFM radio,

I said: You know, with something -- with a
tool like this, we can reach more people with a tool like this.

And I understand that, you know, when you have a culture, and that culture is on its way out, you know, and you have a tool in order to reach these people -- reach these people and maintain this culture -- you know, it's a good thing, you know, I mean it's just a good thing.

And I'm just kind of speaking from my heart here, I don't have anything rehearsed or anything like that.

I didn't come up here -- because I'm just a country boy from the lowcountry, and that's all I am, you know.

But I think LPFM is a great thing, and I hope the Commission would really get behind this idea and do whatever you possibly can to make this a reality, you know, especially for small communities, such as my community.

We have the larger broadcasters there, as well, but, you know, it does not give people like myself, an opportunity to, you
know, get in there and become a part of this
game.

And with LPFM, I think it would give
us an opportunity to be a part in the game.

Because most of the time what I find
with -- just like in the newspaper business,
and, say, like my culture and my community and
diversity, and that kind of thing, you know,
most of the times the stories that are told
about us in newspapers, you know, my culture
and my community, it's usually relegated to the
back pages or becomes a footnote in someone
else's story.

Or you may hear it two or three
o'clock in the morning.

But with, you know, with the tool of
LPFM, that will give us an opportunity to do a
whole lot of things.

So, that's why as simplistic as I
can put it, without using a lot of technical
jargon, I just hope you guys get behind this
and help us out with this.

Thank you very much.

MR. LAKE: Thank you.

I should say that Low Power FM is very
much on the mind of the Commission.

One of the pieces of the puzzle is legislation is pending, but it's something that we will be giving great attention to and agree it has to great promise.

I would like to welcome any other comments or questions.

This is your opportunity to talk to your federal government, and we are listening.

Seeing none, I just want to thank you all – oh, good. Go ahead.

MR. SMITH: Just sneaking in for a minute.

Yeah. My name is Chuck Smith, I have got WLRE LPFM in the Elloree/Santee area of South Carolina.

We have been on the air now for quite a number of years, about eight.

We were one of the first LP stations to be granted in the area.

We have Elloree Education Association is our parent company.

And we have had a lot of good times and stuff with the station.

We serve things as the past
gentleman just said, that a lot of other
stations can't do, probably because of money
and constraints that bigger stations can't
afford to do.

We have done ball games, such as
major and minor league high school games, stuff
like this.

We do our church broadcast on Sunday
from 7 to 12 with Southern Gospel, things that
you don't hear on regular radio.

And we are kind of a minority group
in that respect.

We play traditional to modern
country music blend, which is something you
don't hear on a lot of your modern country
music stations.

We are more of like an Americana-
type station.

And we have been able to do a lot of
things, like I said, that regular broadcast
stations probably could not do, for the simple
fact that it cost them quite a bit of money to
set up and do things like this.

And, you know, we had -- like the
snow that came here about two weeks ago -- we
were on the air until nine o'clock at night
with different reports, letting people know
visibility, road conditions, things like this.

And like I said, we are out in the rural area. We are in Santee where 95 crosses the lake, so the rural area doesn't always get the broadcasting for their local people in that area like we were able to give.

So, I agree with the man on his comments.

I have been an engineer for stations for a number of years before I started, you know, the station of my own.

But like I said, I wanted to reiterate with what he said on that, that LPFM can definitely provide a community presence for everybody in the area.

We have got a lot of listeners on our station, you know, that are dedicated to our station for our hometown area.

And like I said, LP serves a good purpose -- it does.

It serves a good purpose in the fact that it gives community identity, it gives a minority an ability to have their own
broadcasts, their own ways of communications, things like this.

And just like with us doing the ball games with the kids and everything, there is no way you would have been able to get a station that could do elementary kids to high school.

We had a guy come in and do coaches pitch for us in T-ball.

And we did it right on a professional level, you know.

We didn't say: He dropped the ball and it rolled six feet.

We said: The ball is being returned to the pitcher. We are going to have the pitch in just a minute.

But, anyway, we did that. And grandparents that were shut-ins, and people like this were able to get out there and listen.

So, I just wanted to let you all know that LPFM does work.

I mean, it has worked for us, and it's a very good thing for the community.

MR. LAKE: Thank you very
much.

We will be exploring more deeply
issues on the radio side this evening.

So, I hope you will be able to
attend that, as well.

Do we have any other further
comments or questions?

If not, then thank you all very much
for attending.

Thanks to our panelists for a
wonderful discussion.

And this will be very useful to the
Commission as it moves forward to review its rules.

(The hearing concluded at
approximately 3:45 p.m.)
REPORTER'S CERTIFICATE

I, Jane G. LaPorte, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and complete transcription of my stenographic notes taken and transcribed by me.

Dated this fourth day of March, 2010.

____________________________________
Jane G. LaPorte
Court Reporter