

**Federal Communications Commission
Broadcast Localism Hearing
Rapid City, South Dakota
May 26, 2004**

Statement of Alan Harris

Good evening Mr. Chairman and Commissioners. My name is Alan Harris and I am a life-long broadcaster from Wyoming. My wife and I own and operate three radio stations in Sweetwater County, two FM stations and an AM. Sweetwater County is geographically slightly larger than New Jersey, but has a population of 42,000. In addition to operating our company, The Radio Network, I am a member of the Radio Board of the National Association of Broadcasters and serve on the NAB Executive Committee. Before getting into the specifics of our stations' service to the community, I would like to address the issue of localism in broader terms.

Radio programming presents the same challenges and opportunities regardless of the market size or the operator. The coverage of our signals defines who we can serve. In a world of countless sources for entertainment and information, we are required to attract an audience from that local community. That means we have to offer a compelling reason for a local listener to listen to the local station. We are required by law to broadcast in the public interest, but we are required by an even higher authority, our local listeners, to broadcast in their interests. Every broadcaster needs to have an audience and that is why we strive to meet the local demands of our markets.

I would like to tell you that we program our stations in the public interest because we are law abiding citizens and have a higher level of social conscience. But the truth is we serve at the pleasure of the people in our market and under the constant threat that, if they are not pleased, we are silenced at the flick of a switch. In that light, you can be assured that radio is, and always will be, a local medium, with service to local communities at its core, or we shall surely perish.

That said, I do believe that broadcasters are pretty special people because of this intimate connection with their communities. We are professional communicators. We effectively communicate on behalf of candidates, local agencies, retailers and the entire music world. Perhaps we haven't spent enough effort communicating on our own behalf and consequently have poorly told you what we do.

Let me begin to tell you about who we are at The Radio Network by sharing an announcement we recently aired:

I was recently asked, what is The Radio Network? The simple answer is KUGR, KFRZ and KYCS. However, The Radio Network is much more. The Radio Network is a volunteer fire-fighter, a school board member, a member of

Cowboys Against Cancer, a church leader, a hospital board member, a Little League coach, a member of the Chamber of Commerce, National Association of Broadcasters board member, bank board member, water board member, Jr. National Babe Ruth baseball, committee members of Ducks Unlimited, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, Mule Deer Foundation, United Way, Relay for Life, fair board member, youth basketball coach, and member of the Sportscasters and Sportswriters Association. You see, we at The Radio Network are more than just three radio stations. We're part of the community and we take pride in our resume. Thanks for listening and thanks for letting us be a part of your community.

There was more, but that was all we could get into 60 seconds. And that's the local involvement of just 12 people – our entire staff.

Let me talk about what we do on the air. We broadcast 72 local newscasts every week. We air 41 sportscasts. We have a daily public affairs interview program. We ask every candidate in every election in our service area to be a guest on that program and share their views on the issues with our listeners. We provide live coverage from the County Courthouse for every election.

Since 1976, we have aired six hours every week of Spanish language programming. That is the only local source of Hispanic programming in our area. We provide live, play-by-play coverage of all local football and basketball games. We cover local wrestling matches. We have play-by-play coverage of a Little League game of the week all through the summer.

On Saturday mornings, we air the Sean Maxwell show that provides an opportunity for local artists to perform on the air. Two guests each week can showcase their talents. We also air performances by artists who visit our local community college. The Radio Network also sponsors the local Country Showdown Talent Contest to help local musicians.

Like most stations, we provide road and travel information and announce school closings and meeting cancellations due to weather. What is unusual is that we also interrupt our programming every time the fire department is summoned; the volunteers know to listen to our stations to find out where the fire is.

We aid organizations in our community. After 9-11, we teamed with the Green River Fire Department to raise money for victims' families. In just two days, we collected over \$9,000 in a community with just 11,200 people. We are annual participants in the United Way drive, Cowboys Against Cancer and the Boy Scouts Food Drive. Nine years ago, The Radio Network launched our Coats for Kids campaign. We encourage donations by giving donors a limited edition radio station Christmas ornament.

We have been able to purchase over 1,000 new coats with the money contributed by local residents and our local radio stations to Coats for Kids.

In an average week last year, we aired 120 PSAs, 75 percent of which were about local issues. Among the topics we covered were alcohol abuse, domestic violence, smoking, drug use, hunger, and breast cancer.

Mr. Chairman and Commissioners, this gives you a flavor of our local service. We are part and parcel of our community, and this kind of involvement is what hometown radio is all about. Little, if any, of this is required by law or by FCC rules. It is what our listeners expect; it is what we do in Green River; and it is what local broadcasters do all across the country.

Thank you for your attention. I would be pleased to answer your questions.