

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
October 22, 2003**

**Comments of Joan Siefert Rose's
General Manager, WUNC Radio**

Good evening. Thank you for this opportunity to address the Commission's Task Force on Localism on behalf of the non-commercial broadcasters in North Carolina.

The topic of today's hearing—local public service, or “localism”—touches upon my core responsibilities as a public broadcaster.

I'm sure most of you also have tuned in to public radio at some point. North Carolina has 15 different public radio licensees that offer news, public affairs, classical music, jazz, bluegrass, hip-hop, reggae, and community service announcements and reading services to the blind. We have a combined weekly audience of one-point-three million listeners.

One of these licensees is WUNC Public Radio, a news and public affairs service of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We serve 300,000 weekly listeners in 36 counties in North Carolina. We do not receive any direct funds from either the University or the State of North Carolina, and in a typical year we receive less than 10 percent of our operating dollars from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Instead, we must rely on the generous support of local community of listeners—both individuals and corporate supporters—to keep us on the air. Our financial viability is *directly*

dependent on the extent to which the service we provide is responsive to the needs and interests of the “local” listeners we serve.

As a public broadcaster, WUNC is an editorial voice that speaks with a North Carolina accent—that is, we live and breathe the stories we report. Our reporting on education is informed by the fact that we send our children to local schools. And our call-in programs tackle controversial policy issues by airing multiple and diverse viewpoints from all corners of our state. For example, during an in-depth segment on the federal tobacco allotment program, we included viewpoints from lawmakers, agricultural experts, anti-smoking activists, and farmers whose livelihoods depend on tobacco farming.

Local programming is very personal to me. When I became a broadcast journalist nearly 25 years ago, the industry required each radio station to provide a minimum amount of local news and public affairs. I learned my craft at small commercial stations and practiced it in increasingly larger markets. Although commercial stations no longer face specific local programming requirements, local news and public affairs programming remain the very foundation of public broadcasting. While commercial broadcasters still perform valuable public services—a point that is ably documented here today—we are unique in our ability, as a non-commercial station, to dedicate enormous amounts of our time and resources to creating purely local programming. We also are committed to training future broadcast journalists so that the local programming skills my

generation learned 25 years ago may be practiced by the next generation of public broadcasters.

The FCC can help support the strong local programming on non-commercial public stations like WUNC. You can protect the technical integrity of our broadcast signals by enforcing non-interference technical standards in a fair and reasonable manner. While WUNC recently incurred an expensive technical challenge at the FCC against an interfering translator station, most public stations do not have the financial or legal resources to do so. There is a concern among public broadcasters that the FCC may not be as diligent as it has been historically in protecting the technical integrity of the FM spectrum. The laws of physics have not changed. I encourage the Commission to be vigilant, for the good of listeners, in enforcing and protecting its technical rules and standards.

I wish, in closing, to pay tribute to the UNC-TV public television stations throughout our state and the local public TV station here in Charlotte. Their public service stewardship to their communities sets a standard that is the envy of public television broadcasters across the country.

Thank you again for the opportunity to speak today on behalf of our state's public broadcasting service.