

## ABC TV Stations Set for Review in Early License Renewal Applications

The FCC's Media Bureau has taken the extremely rare step of ordering ABC to file license renewal applications for its television stations immediately even though the stations' various normal eight-year license terms do not expire for periods of two to five years in the future. In its *Order* (DA 26-416), the Bureau directed ABC to file its applications by May 28 for all eight of its stations, including KFSN-TV, Fresno, California; KABC-TV, Los Angeles, California; KGO-TV, San Francisco, California; WLS-TV, Chicago, Illinois; WABC-TV, New York, New York; WTVD, Durham, North Carolina; WPVI-TV, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and KTRK-TV, Houston, Texas.

The Bureau states that it has been investigating these stations for possible violations of the Communications Act and the FCC's rules, "including the agency's prohibition on unlawful discrimination." The Bureau states that it has issued two Letters of Inquiry to which the Bureau says that ABC "has purported to respond." An issue being investigated by

*continued on page 9*

## Regulatory Fees Proposed for FY 2026

The FCC has released a *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (FCC 26-25) in Docket 26-94 proposing regulatory fees for fiscal year 2026. The Commission aims to collect approximately \$416.1 million in regulatory fees for FY 2026. Congress directs the FCC to collect these fees from the entities that it regulates to cover the Commission's operating costs. The fees are allocated among the agency's bureaus in proportion to each bureau's costs. Each bureau's allocation of fees is then divided among the entities regulated by the bureau.

Under the proposal, the Media Bureau's share of regulatory fee responsibility would increase slightly from 28.76% in FY 2025 to 28.93% in FY 2026. Within the Media Bureau allocation, broadcasters would account for 12.80% of total FCC regulatory fee collections, compared to 13.14% in FY 2025. The FCC estimates that broadcasters

*continued on page 7*

## FM Auction 114 Set To Begin February 2, 2027

The FCC's Media Bureau and Office of Economics and Analytics have released a Public Notice (DA 26-444) establishing February 2, 2027, as the start date for the next auction of commercial FM construction permits and proposing procedures for the auction.

The FCC plans to offer 132 construction permits for new FM stations at locations throughout the United States. The complete list of permits is available on the FCC's website at <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-26-444A2.pdf>.

The Commission proposes to use a simultaneous multiple-round auction format similar to the procedures used in prior broadcast auctions. A deadline for filing short-form applications will be announced at a later date. The FCC proposes to implement anonymous bidding procedures. Accordingly, information contained in short-form applications — including the permits on which an applicant intends to bid, the amount of upfront payments submitted, the bidder's eligibility level, and other identifying bidder information — will not be disclosed publicly until after bidding concludes.

*continued on page 8*

## IN THIS ISSUE

ABC Seeks Exemption for <i>The View</i> .....	2
FCC To Review TV Program Rating System .....	3
Deadlines to Watch.....	4-5
Relaxed Audible Crawl Rule Proposed.....	6
Auction 114 Freeze Announced.....	8
DIRS Simplified.....	9

For more information about or help with any of the items reported in **Antenna™** please contact:

**Donald E. Martin, P.C.**

P.O. Box 8433

Falls Church, Virginia 22041

Tel: (703) 642-2344

Fax: (703) 940-0473

E-mail: dempc@prodigy.net

# ABC Seeks News Interview Program Exemption for *The View*

By way of a Public Notice (DA 26-517) in Docket 26-124, the FCC's Media Bureau has invited public comment about a Petition for Declaratory Ruling filed by ABC and its Houston affiliate, KTRK-TV. ABC requests a declaratory ruling that its daytime talk program, *The View*, meets the criteria to be a bona fide news interview program and is therefore exempt from the equal opportunity requirements for political programming found in Section 315 of the Communications Act.

The Media Bureau ordered ABC to submit this petition in the context of its investigation of ABC's television stations, and especially its concerns arising from an episode of *The View* featuring an interview with a candidate running for the United States Senate from Texas that did not include provisions for equal opportunities for that candidate's opponent(s).

The investigation has taken a sharper turn when the Bureau mandated that ABC immediately file early applications for the renewal of the licenses for all eight of its television stations. That is the subject of a related story in this newsletter.

In its 52-page filing, ABC urges the FCC to reaffirm that *The View* qualifies for the "bona fide news interview" exemption under Section 315(a) of the Communications Act, while sharply criticizing recent FCC actions as unconstitutional, unprecedented, and likely to chill broadcast political coverage. ABC explains that *The View* easily satisfies the established three-part test for being exempt because it is (1) regularly scheduled, (2) editorially controlled by ABC (rather than a candidate), and (3) books guests based on newsworthiness rather than partisan favoritism. Substantial portions of the petition are devoted to describing the program's structure, editorial process, and the professional backgrounds of its co-hosts and producers.

ABC asserts that *The View* has operated under a valid FCC declaratory ruling since 2002 recognizing the program as a bona fide news interview show and contends that the Commission has no basis to revisit that determination now. The company warns that narrowing the exemption would undermine broadcasters' editorial discretion and discourage candidate coverage during the 2026 election cycle.

ABC also emphasizes that the FCC historically has interpreted the "bona fide news interview" exemption broadly. The Petition cites numerous FCC rulings extending the exemption to programs ranging from *Donahue* and *Politically Incorrect with Bill Maher* to *The Jerry Springer Show*, *The Howard Stern Show*, and political call-in programs hosted by elected officials.

Aside from the question of whether or not *The View* is exempt from equal opportunities requirements, the Petition includes a broad First Amendment argument. ABC contends that applying equal opportunities obligations to programs like *The View* would improperly interfere with broadcasters' editorial judgments and compel speech in violation of constitutional protections recognized in cases such as *Miami Herald v. Tornillo* and *Moody v. NetChoice*. The company further argues that the constitutional concerns surrounding Section 315 have only intensified in today's media environment, where viewers have access to cable channels, podcasts, streaming services, social media, and other non-broadcast outlets not subject to equal opportunities obligations. According to ABC, imposing mandatory equal time requirements on broadcasters alone would discourage stations from carrying candidate interviews or political discussions altogether.

ABC further claims that any departure from long-standing FCC precedent must be decided by the full Commission rather than Media Bureau staff acting under delegated authority.

In the Public Notice, the Media Bureau asks commenters to opine on whether *The View* qualifies as a bona fide news interview program. Are the relevant decisions about format and participants on *The View* based on newsworthiness or on an attempt to support or oppose particular candidates? Does Section 315 pass relevant constitutional scrutiny, either in general or as applied here?

Comments are due to be filed by June 22. July 6 is the deadline for reply comments. The complete text of ABC's Petition is available at this link to the FCC's website: <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/10522087167981/1>.

# FCC To Review TV Program Rating System

The FCC's Media Bureau has opened a new inquiry into whether the television industry's voluntary program ratings system continues to provide parents adequate information about the content their children are watching. In a Public Notice (DA 26-392) in Docket 19-41, the Bureau is seeking comment on whether the current TV Parental Guidelines system and the oversight structure administered by the TV Oversight Monitoring Board ("TVOMB") remain effective in helping parents make informed viewing decisions.

The Bureau said it has been contacted by members of the public who are concerned about "ratings creep," alleging that programming containing mature subject matter is increasingly being labeled as appropriate for younger audiences. The Public Notice specifically highlights complaints that programs discussing transgender or gender non-binary issues may be appearing in children's programming without additional parental disclosures.

The Bureau revisits the television ratings framework originally developed following the passage of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Under that system, industry participants established the familiar TV-Y, TV-Y7, TV-G, TV-PG, TV-14, and TV-MA ratings categories, along with content descriptors for violence, language, sexual situations, and related material. The Bureau asks whether the existing ratings and content descriptors provide parents with enough information "to make informed decisions concerning viewing decisions for their family, including when gender identity themes are discussed or displayed." The Bureau also seeks comment on whether programming containing such themes should carry different ratings or additional descriptors.

Beyond the substance of ratings, the FCC is also examining the structure and transparency of the TVOMB itself. Pursuant to a Congressional directive, the Media Bureau submitted a report in 2019 to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations on the accuracy of the voluntary rating system and the ability of the TVOMB to address public concerns. In that report, the Bureau offered the following suggestions:

- TVOMB should increase efforts to promote public awareness of TVOMB and its role in overseeing the

rating system. TVOMB and the industry should increase outreach efforts concerning the existence of the rating system and consider additional ways to publicize the ability of the public to file complaints with TVOMB and provide instructions on how to file complaints.

- TVOMB should consider ways to inform the public of the number of complaints it receives, the nature of the complaints, the program and network or producer involved, and any action taken by TVOMB or the industry in response to the complaints. The Board could consider issuing an annual report on the complaints it has received, how they were adjudicated, and whether they led to the rating of a program being changed for future airings.
- TVOMB should hold at least one public meeting annually to seek direct public input.

The Bureau also made suggestions about the accuracy of the ratings being applied under the TV Parental Guidelines:

- TVOMB should consider random audits or spot checks to analyze the accuracy and consistency of the ratings in addition to the survey data it already collects.
- TVOMB should use this combined data to determine if any changes are needed to the ratings system to ensure they are as helpful as possible to viewers.

The Bureau solicits comment on whether and how these suggestions have been implemented. How does the TVOMB engage with the public? The Bureau questions whether the Board adequately represents viewpoints outside the entertainment industry and asks whether additional family-oriented or faith-based organizations should be included.

The Public Notice additionally asks whether ratings are being applied consistently across broadcast television, MVPD platforms, and streaming services. The Bureau specifically inquires whether streaming platforms interpret youth-oriented ratings categories more permissively than traditional broadcasters or cable networks.

Reply comments can be submitted until June 22.



# DEADLINES TO WATCH



## License Renewal, FCC Reports & Public Inspection Files

- June 1 Deadline to place EEO Public File Report in Public Inspection File and on station's internet website for all nonexempt radio and television stations in **Arizona, District of Columbia, Idaho, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming.**
- June 1 Deadline for all broadcast licensees and permittees of stations in **Arizona, District of Columbia, Idaho, Maryland, Michigan, Nevada, New Mexico, Ohio, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wyoming** to file annual report on all adverse findings and final actions taken by any court or governmental administrative agency involving misconduct of the licensee, permittee, or any person or entity having an attributable interest in the station(s).

- June 1 Mid-Term EEO review begins for certain radio stations in **Delaware and Pennsylvania**, and certain television stations in Texas.
- July 10 Deadline to place Issues/Programs List for previous quarter in Public Inspection File for all full service radio and television stations and Class A TV stations.
- July 10 Deadline for noncommercial stations to place quarterly report re third-party fundraising in Public Inspection File.
- July 10 Deadline for Class A Television stations to place quarterly documentation about Class A eligibility in Public Inspection File.

## Deadlines for Comments in FCC and Other Proceedings

DOCKET

COMMENTS REPLY COMMENTS

(All proceedings are before the FCC unless otherwise noted.)

Docket 26-94; NPRM (FCC 26-25) 2026 Regulatory Fees	May 28	June 12
Docket 26-85; Public Notice (DA 26-376) Assignment of TV stations from IYNO Broadcast Licenses, LLC to ION Television License, LLC	Petitions to Deny Past	Oppositions June 2
Docket 26-105; Public Notice (DA 26-444) Procedures for FM Auction 114	June 9	June 24
Docket 26-93; Public Notice (DA 26-411) Paramount Global Petition for Declaratory Ruling re foreign ownership	Past	June 11
Docket 12-107; 3rd FNPRM (FCC 26-31) Audible crawl rule	June 15	June 29
Docket 26-124; Public Notice (DA 26-517) ABC Petition for Declaratory Ruling re "The View"	June 22	July 6
Docket 26-78; Public Notice (DA 26-333) Competition in the communications marketplace	Past	June 22
Docket 19-41; Public Notice (DA 26-392) TV program ratings for children	Past	June 22



# DEADLINES TO WATCH



## Lowest Unit Charge Schedule For 2026 Political Campaign Season

During the 45-day period prior to a primary election or party caucus and the 60-day period prior to the general election, commercial broadcast stations are prohibited from charging any legally qualified candidate for federal elective office (who does not waive his or her rights) more than the station's Lowest Unit Charge ("LUC") for advertising that promotes the candidate's campaign for office. Lowest-unit-charge restrictions in connection with statewide primary elections are now or soon will be in effect in the following jurisdictions. Some of these dates may be subject to change.

STATE	ELECTION DATE	LUC PERIOD	STATE	ELECTION DATE	LUC PERIOD
California	June 2	Apr. 18 – June 2	Michigan	August 4	June 20 – Aug. 4
Iowa	June 2	Apr. 18 – June 2	Missouri	August 4	June 20 – Aug. 4
Montana	June 2	Apr. 18 – June 2	Virginia	August 4	June 20 – Aug. 4
New Jersey	June 2	Apr. 18 – June 2	Washington	August 4	June 20 – Aug. 4
New Mexico	June 2	Apr. 18 – June 2	Tennessee	August 6	June 22 – Aug. 6
South Dakota	June 2	Apr. 18 – June 2	Hawaii	August 8	June 24 – Aug. 8
Maine	June 9	Apr. 25 – June 9	Connecticut	August 11	June 27 – Aug. 11
Nevada	June 9	Apr. 25 – June 9	Minnesota	August 11	June 27 – Aug. 11
North Dakota	June 9	Apr. 25 – June 9	Vermont	August 11	June 27 – Aug. 11
South Carolina	June 9	Apr. 25 – June 9	Wisconsin	August 11	June 27 – Aug. 11
Oklahoma	June 16	May 2 – June 16	Alaska	August 18	July 4 – Aug. 18
Maryland	June 23	May 9 – June 23	Florida	August 18	July 4 – Aug. 18
New York	June 23	May 9 – June 23	Wyoming	August 18	July 4 – Aug. 18
Utah	June 23	May 9 – June 23	Massachusetts	Sept. 1	July 18 – Sept. 1
Colorado	June 30	May 16 – June 30	New Hampshire	Sept. 8	July 25 – Sept. 8
Arizona	July 21	June 6 – July 21	Rhode Island	Sept. 8	July 25 – Sept. 8
Kansas	August 4	June 20 – Aug. 4	Delaware	Sept. 15	Aug. 1 – Sept. 15

## Paperwork Reduction Act Proceedings

The FCC is required by the Paperwork Reduction Act to periodically collect public information on the paperwork burdens imposed by its record-keeping requirements in connection with certain rules, policies, applications, and forms. Public comment has been invited about this aspect of the following matters by the filing deadlines indicated.

TOPIC	COMMENT DEADLINE
Modification of LPTV transmission system, Section 74.751	May 29
Filing of LPTV license applications, Sections 74.165, 74.432, 74.832	May 29
LPTV silent periods, Section 74.763	May 29
CORES registration form, Form 160	June 1
AM directional antenna field strength measurement, Section 73.61	June 1
Low power auxiliary broadcast stations co-channel coordination with television broadcast stations, Section 74.802	June 1
Remittance advice form, Form 159	June 5
Noncommercial assignments/transfers of control, Form 2100, Schedules 314 and 315, Sections 73.865, 73.7005	June 8
LPTV and Class A TV applications, Form 2100, Schedule D	June 15
Historic preservation review process, Forms 620, 621	June 29
Broadcast station chief operator, Section 73.1870	June 29
Rebroadcasting, Sections 73.1207, 74.784, 74.1284	June 29
LPFM construction permit application, Form 2100, Schedule 318	July 6
Broadcast construction permit application, Form 2100	July 13



# DEADLINES TO WATCH



## Cut-Off Date for AM and FM Applications to Change Community of License

The FCC has accepted for filing the applications identified below proposing to change the community of license for each station. These applications may also include proposals to modify technical facilities. The deadline for filing comments about any of the applications in the list below is **July 13, 2026**. Informal objections may be filed any time prior to grant of the application.

PRESENT COMMUNITY	PROPOSED COMMUNITY	STATION	CHANNEL	FREQUENCY
Hapeville, GA	North Decatur, GA	WJZA(AM)	n/a	1100
Tompkinsville, KY	Park City, KY	WWZG	221	92.1
Oakland, MD	Chalkhill, PA	WKTD	222	92.3
Trenton, NJ	Jobstown, NJ	WNJE(AM)	n/a	920
N. Wilksboro, NC	Stony Point, NC	WKBC-FM	247	97.3
Falfurrias, TX	Premont, TX	KDFM	277	103.3

## Relaxed Audible Crawl Rule Proposed

The FCC has launched a new rulemaking that could finally resolve a decade-long compliance problem involving the agency’s “audible crawl” emergency information rules for television broadcasters. In a *Third Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (FCC 26-31) in Docket 12-107, the Commission proposes to revise its accessibility rules to permit stations to satisfy the requirement for aurally conveying non-textual emergency graphics — such as weather radar maps — by ensuring that equivalent information is included in a text crawl that is also read aloud over a secondary audio channel.

The proceeding stems from rules adopted under the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act requiring emergency information shown visually during non-newscast programming to be made accessible to blind and visually impaired audience members through a secondary audio stream. The current rule technically requires broadcasters to provide an aural representation of visual, non-textual emergency graphics, including radar imagery and maps.

Since the rule’s 2015 compliance deadline, however, the Media Bureau has granted seven consecutive waivers after broadcasters demonstrated that no practical automated technology exists to translate live visual graphics into accurate audio descriptions. The FCC acknowledged in the NPRM that “a technical solution to comply with the current rule is not currently possible” and noted that no workable automated solution has emerged despite more than 13 years of industry efforts.

Under the proposal, the FCC would amend Section 79.2(b)(2)(ii) of its rules to state that, for “visual but non-textual emergency information,” compliance would be deemed satisfied if a textual crawl provides emergency information “duplicative of or equivalent to” the visual information, so long as the text crawl itself is aurally

presented over the secondary audio stream. The Commission emphasized that the proposal is intended to preserve accessibility while avoiding unintended consequences that could reduce the amount of emergency information stations provide visually. The agency noted that some broadcasters reportedly stopped displaying weather radar graphics when prior waivers temporarily lapsed out of concern over potential enforcement exposure.

The proposal closely tracks a 2024 petition filed by the National Association of Broadcasters (“NAB”), which argued that most visual emergency graphics already duplicate information conveyed through accompanying text crawls that are converted to speech using text-to-speech systems. The FCC said the proposed rule change would eliminate the need for repeated waiver extensions while maintaining access to emergency information for visually-handicapped individuals.

The NPRM also seeks comment on whether the FCC should codify industry “best practices,” including recommendations that stations run emergency text crawls frequently enough to ensure accessibility and that the crawls accurately convey the same critical details as the visual graphics. NAB has suggested that stations airing visual emergency graphics should run related text crawls at least every 10 to 15 minutes while the graphics remain on-screen.

In addition, the Commission asks whether the revised rule should apply broadly to all video programming distributors and providers — including MVPDs — rather than only broadcasters, even though broadcasters have been the primary entities affected by the long-standing waiver requests.

Comments will be due by June 15, and reply comments, by June 29.

# Regulatory Fees Proposed for FY 2026 continued from page 1

collectively would pay approximately \$53.243 million in FY 2026 regulatory fees, up from approximately \$51.286 million in FY 2025, reflecting both the larger overall FCC appropriation and revised allocations of agency staff.

The FCC proposes to continue calculating TV regulatory fees based on the terrain-limited population served within each station’s noise-limited contour, using 2020 Census data, TVStudy software, and LMS technical data. The Commission proposes adopting a FY 2026 television regulatory fee factor of \$0.006957 per person served. The per person figure for FY 2025 was \$0.006674. Appendix F to the NPRM contains the proposed fee calculations for each full-power television station and is available at this link to the FCC’s website: <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/FCC-26-25A1.pdf>.

The categories and classifications of fees for radio

stations remain unchanged from 2025. However, individual fees per station are proposed to increase slightly.

Proposed fees for most types of authorizations of interest to broadcasters are shown in the tables below.

Nonprofit and government entities are exempt from regulatory fees, including for commercial stations.

The figures that the Commission finally adopts for these fees are typically announced in late summer. A due date for payment can be expected sometime in September.

The imposition of regulatory fees is required by statute. However, the Commission has discretion as to how to allocate obligations for fees among its regulatees. The agency invites comment on its proposed allocations. Comments are due May 28, with reply comments due June 12.

## FCC REGULATORY FEES PROPOSED FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026

Type of Authorization	FY 2025	Proposed FY 2026
Full Power TV (per person in service area)	\$ 0.006598	\$ 0.006957
Full Power TV Construction Permit	5,200	5,300
Class A TV, LPTV, TV/FM Translator & Booster	245	265
AM Radio Construction Permit	570	600
FM Radio Construction Permit	1,000	1,050
Satellite Earth Station	2,060	3,010

### FY 2025 REGULATORY FEES FOR RADIO

Population Served	AM Class A	AM Class B	AM Class C	AM Class D	FM A, B1, C3	FM B,C,C0,C1,C2
0-10,000	\$ 545	\$ 395	\$ 340	\$ 375	\$ 600	\$ 685
21,001-25,000	910	655	570	625	1,000	1,140
25,001-75,000	1,365	985	855	940	1,500	1,710
75,001-150,000	2,050	1,475	1,285	1,405	2,250	2,565
150,001-500,000	3,075	2,215	1,925	2,115	3,380	3,855
500,001-1,200,000	4,605	3,315	2,885	3,160	5,060	5,770
1,200,001-3,000,000	6,915	4,980	4,330	4,750	7,600	8,665
3,000,001-6,000,000	10,365	7,460	6,490	7,120	11,390	12,985
6,000,000+	15,550	11,195	9,740	10,680	17,090	19,485

### PROPOSED FY 2026 REGULATORY FEES FOR RADIO

Population Served	AM Class A	AM Class B	AM Class C	AM Class D	FM A, B1, C3	FM B,C,C0,C1,C2
0-10,000	\$ 575	\$ 415	\$ 360	\$ 395	\$ 630	\$ 720
10,001-25,000	960	690	600	660	1,050	1,200
25,001-75,000	1,440	1,035	900	990	1,575	1,800
75,001-150,000	2,160	1,555	1,350	1,485	2,365	2,700
150,001-500,000	3,245	2,330	2,030	2,230	3,550	4,055
500,001-1,200,000	4,860	3,490	3,035	3,340	5,315	6,070
1,200,001-3,000,000	7,295	5,245	4,560	5,015	7,980	9,120
3,000,001-6,000,000	10,935	7,860	6,835	7,515	11,960	13,670
6,000,000+	16,405	11,790	10,255	11,280	17,945	20,510

## FM Auction 114 Set To Begin February 2, 2027 continued from page 1

Consistent with past practice, applicants will be required to submit refundable upfront payments in order to qualify to bid. Each construction permit will be assigned a specific number of bidding units equal to the dollar amount of the upfront payment required for that permit. The number of bidding units assigned to a permit will remain fixed throughout the auction, regardless of changes in bid amounts.

Bidders may place bids on multiple permits as long as the total number of bidding units associated with those permits does not exceed the bidder's eligibility. Applicants therefore must calculate their desired bidding eligibility in advance and submit sufficient upfront payments to support that eligibility.

The FCC also proposes a 100 percent activity requirement. Under that proposal, bidders must actively bid using all of their bidding units during each round. Each bidder will be permitted to use waivers in up to three rounds. If a bidder fails to use all of its bidding units in a round and has no waivers remaining, its bidding eligibility will be reduced accordingly. Bidding units associated with permits on which the bidder holds provisionally winning bids will be considered active for purposes of the rule.

The Commission proposes minimum opening bids for each permit equal to the required upfront payment. Proposed minimum opening bids for the 132 permits range from \$500 to \$30,000. The Commission states that the proposed amounts were determined based on factors including facility class, market size, population coverage, and recent broadcast transaction data. Commenters are

invited to propose alternative minimum bids where they believe the FCC's proposed amounts are inappropriate.

The auction would proceed through sequential bidding rounds, with results released after each round. Bids may be submitted electronically through the FCC's auction system or by telephone. The auction will continue until a round occurs in which no new bids are submitted for any permit.

The FCC further proposes a minimum acceptable bid increment of 10 percent. Under that approach, after a bid has been placed on a permit, the minimum acceptable bid in the next round would be approximately 10 percent higher than the standing provisionally winning bid. In addition to the minimum acceptable bid, bidders may select from eight additional higher bid amounts calculated in increments of five percent of the provisionally winning bid.

Provisionally winning bids may not be withdrawn and will remain in place unless and until a higher bid is submitted in a later round.

The Public Notice does not address post-auction procedures. However, in prior auctions, winning bidders have been required to submit payment for their winning bids and file complete long-form construction permit applications within several weeks after the close of bidding. Final post-auction procedures are expected to be announced when the FCC adopts final auction rules.

Comments on any of these proposed procedures are due June 9 in Docket 26-105. Reply comments may be submitted until June 24.

---

## FM Filing Freeze Imposed in Connection With Auction 114

The FCC has established February 2, 2027, as the start date for the next auction of commercial FM construction permits. To stabilize the FM database in the run-up to that event, the Media Bureau has released a Public Notice (DA 26-445) imposing a freeze on filings that would have a disruptive effect on any of the 132 permits offered in the auction. A complete list of these permits is available on the FCC's website at <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DA-26-444A2.pdf>.

Unacceptable filings that would affect the auction allotments include:

- Applications proposing to modify any of the auction allotments.

- Petitions and counterproposals that propose a change in channel, class, community, or reference coordinates of any of the auction allotments.
- Applications, petitions, and counterproposals that fail to fully protect any of the auction allotments.

Minor change applications for other stations and/or allotments, which can be filed on a first-come first-served basis, must protect the reference coordinates of each of the allotments in the auction.

This filing freeze will remain in effect until the day after the filing deadline for post-auction long-form construction permit applications.

# DIRS Simplified

In a *Third Report and Order* (FCC 26-34) in Docket 21-346, the FCC has adopted a sweeping overhaul of its Disaster Information Reporting System (DIRS), streamlining reporting obligations for communications providers while expanding the system to cover public safety broadband networks. Broadcasters' participation, while encouraged, remains voluntary. The Commission said that the changes are intended to modernize disaster reporting requirements and reduce administrative burdens on providers during emergencies, allowing companies to focus more resources on service restoration.

DIRS is a web-based system through which the FCC collects information from communications providers during major disasters, such as hurricanes, wildfires, and earthquakes. When the system is activated, communications providers use it to report the operational status of their service and infrastructure, to submit updates about the progress of restoration of facilities and service, and to request assistance. The FCC compiles the data received and forwards status reports to federal emergency management officials. The DIRS data also form the basis for reports of aggregated restoration information, and assessments concerning communications reliability during disasters.

This *Order* substantially simplifies DIRS reporting procedures. The FCC will replace the current system of multiple worksheets with a single dynamic reporting form tailored to the services provided by each filer. Providers

using manual entry also will gain a new "one-click" option allowing them to certify that there has been no change from the prior day's report, rather than re-entering the same data repeatedly.

The Commission said the changes are particularly important for smaller and rural providers that may have limited engineering and operations personnel available during disasters. Industry commenters, including the National Association of Broadcasters, supported the reforms as common-sense steps that reduce paperwork burdens and facilitate voluntary participation by small entities without diminishing the usefulness of DIRS data for emergency managers.

The FCC also eliminated several existing reporting requirements it concluded were duplicative or of limited value for emergency response. Among other things, the order removes the inter-exchange carrier blocking worksheet, eliminates certain cable video subscriber reporting fields, and drops the requirement that providers file a "final report" within 24 hours after DIRS deactivation.

At the same time, the FCC expanded DIRS obligations to include public safety voice and broadband network operators, including networks such as FirstNet, Verizon Frontline, and T-Mobile's T-Priority service. The Commission concluded that emergency managers need direct visibility into the operational status of these increasingly critical public safety communications systems during disasters.

---

## ABC TV Stations Set for Review in Early License Renewal Applications continued from page 1

the Commission concerns ABC's daytime talk program, *The View*. In particular, a subject of the agency's scrutiny was the appearance on that program of a Texas senatorial candidate without provisions for equal opportunity for that candidate's opponent(s). ABC's position was that the program qualified for the bona fide news interview exemption to the equal opportunities requirements. ABC also relied on the fact that the Media Bureau has already determined that *The View* qualified for the exemption in a 2002 ruling. Nonetheless, the Bureau ordered ABC to file a petition for a new declaratory ruling on that topic. ABC has submitted that petition, and the Bureau has invited public comment about it. The petition

is the subject of a related story in this newsletter.

In any event, the Bureau determined that "additional actions are appropriate at this time," citing Section 73.3539 of the FCC's rules which provides for mandating an early license renewal application if necessary for the proper conduct of an investigation.

Commissioner Anna Gomez issued a sharp objection to this development. She stated that "This is the most egregious action this FCC has taken in violation of the First Amendment. . . . This is an unprecedented and politically motivated attempt to interfere with how broadcasters operate, and this unlawful overreach will fail."

ANTENNA™ is an information service about current events in communications law edited and published by Donald E. Martin. This publication is produced only to report on current events and factual matters in the field of communications law. Publication and dissemination of this material is not intended to constitute the practice of law or the rendering of legal advice. No attorney-client relationship shall be deemed to exist between the publisher or provider and any other party as a result of the publication, dissemination, distribution or other use of this material. The publisher attempts to ensure that the information reported is accurate, but no warranty, express or implied, is given as to the accuracy or completeness of any information or statement published herein. All material published herein is protected by copyright and all rights are reserved. © 2026 Donald E. Martin, P.C.