

PROMETHEUS RADIO PROJECT

PO Box 42158 Philadelphia, PA 19101 (215)727-9620
info@prometheusradio.org, www.prometheusradio.org



RELEASE: Senate Commerce Committee Reaffirms Low Power Radio Service

CONTACT: Hannah Sassaman, hannahjs@prometheusradio.org, 215-727-9620
Pete Tridish petri@prometheusradio.org, 215-605-9297

On June 28th, advocates of low power FM (LPFM) radio, a service used by churches, schools, activist organizations, emergency responders, and hundreds of communities, applauded the Senate Commerce Committee's vote to expand the low power FM radio service. The vote approved an amendment to a major telecommunications bill currently before the Commerce Committee. This vote marks a major step towards the expansion of low power FM radio to the large cities of the United States, and potentially hundreds, if not thousands, of other communities across this country. The vote also affirms the Commerce Committee's previous support of LPFM in 2004 and 2005.

Senator McCain (R-AZ), a sponsor of the bill, stated that after 2 years and 2.2 million dollars of taxpayer money were spent, the study reaffirmed the FCC's original conclusions in favor of a full low power FM radio service. "I think we ought to send the National Association of Broadcasters a bill for that study," said McCain.

Senator Cantwell, (D-WA), another of the bill's sponsors, said that low power FM radio was about allowing the diverse voices of America to speak. "The only people left opposing this bill are those who oppose that diversity," said the Senator.

Senator Cantwell's remarks were immediately followed by those of low power FM radio's chief opponent, Montana Senator Conrad Burns, who, in 2000, famously opined about LPFM, "I've had about all the diversity I can stand." Senator Burns claimed that there were new radio stations available in every market in the United States, at any power level, and thus low power stations were unnecessary. "It is difficult to determine what might have led Senator Burns to claim that there are stations available at every power level in every market. Someone must have deliberately misled the Senator on this point, because there is no truth in this statement, and it's hard to tell what he might have been thinking. Oh well!" shrugged Hannah Sassaman of the Prometheus Radio Project.

Senator Lautenberg introduced an amendment that would exclude New Jersey from the expanded low power FM service, a service he supported in principle while expressing concern on the impact to New Jersey's relatively packed airwaves. The Senator was able to append his amendment for his home state, which has relatively few stations due to its proximity to New York and Philadelphia. Pete Tridish of the Prometheus Radio Project, responded to this, saying that "it is unfortunate that Senator Lautenberg has been so misinformed on this issue. There are numerous small towns in New Jersey that fit the criteria for low power FM stations, even though they are ineligible for full power stations. Low Power is New Jersey's last chance to get properly represented on the radio dial."

Groups as diverse as the Christian Coalition, The Future of Music Coalition, the United Church of Christ, Free Press, Common Cause, United States Catholic Conference of Bishops, and many others came together in support of the amendment to expand low power FM.

"The Prometheus Radio Project thanks Senators McCain, Cantwell, Lott, Inouye, Rockefeller, Nelson, Sununu, Vitter, Lautenberg, Boxer, Dorgan, Kerry, Pryor, and Allen for their vision of a diverse, democratic, locally powerful radio dial," said Tridish of Prometheus.

Low power FM radio was created in January of 2000 by the FCC as a new class of licenses that could be held by small civil society groups. Since then hundreds of stations have gone on the air in small towns, operated by groups ranging from schools, to churches, to farmworkers unions, highway authorities, and environmental organizations. Low power FM radio was excluded from major urban areas by an appropriations rider sponsored by Conrad Burns in December of 2000.