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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Senate Commerce Committee Passes Historic Bill to Expand Low Power FM Community Radio! Grassroots Organizing Leads to Major Victory, One Step Closer to LPFM Service in America's Cities

The United States Senate Commerce Committee voted to approve a major bill on Thursday, opening the way for Congress to substantially expand the number of community media outlets in the United States. The bill is designed to allow thousands more Low Power FM Community radio stations to reach Americans in cities, and all across the country. An amendment by Senator Burns of Montana to further delay low power radio was defeated, but an amendment imposing special additional interference requirements for New Jersey was passed.

Senate Bill #2505, the bill designed to 'implement the recommendations of the Federal Communications Commission regarding Low Power FM', (LPFM) was introduced by Senators John McCain, Republican of Arizona, and Patrick Leahy, Democrat of Vermont. This unusual bipartisan partnership, and this successful movement of the bill into the full Congress, came about as a result of the enthusiastic and energized grassroots advocacy of Americans frustrated with the poor quality of media across the country.

"Low Power radio should not be controversial," said Pete Tridish, Technical Director of Prometheus Radio Project. "While the question of whether a 100 watt station can interfere with a 50,000 watt station is a simple "No" at first -- and last -- glance, the NAB has been trying to make the issue look more complicated than it is with a snow job of irrelevant technical nitpicking. All that stands between American communities and Low Power FM radio is the deeply entrenched lobbying group, the National Association of Broadcasters. They are fighting an interference threat that doesn't exist on behalf of a constituency of broadcast stations that has more important things to worry about."

According to advocates and volunteers who stood in the extremely crowded Committee meeting room today, the bipartisan beginnings of s2505 did not extend completely into today's vote. Senator Conrad Burns, Republican of Montana, introduced a bill that would force the FCC to study the economic impact of more LPFM stations, and the 'potential interference' they would cause, in today's markets. "It is ironic to see calls for economic impact studies from free market Republicans. Protecting existing broadcasters from new competition is a great example of how lobbyist-driven economics works -- socialism for the rich and well connected, and artificially scarce 'markets' for everyone else," said Tridish.

After Burns' amendment was defeated, Senator Frank Lautenberg introduced an amendment that would supposedly protect radio consumers in densely populated New Jersey from the 'potential interference' offered by LPFM stations. "The Lautenberg amendment did pass, by a voice vote, and then the bill itself passed, also by voice vote," reported Prometheus' Program Director Hannah Sassaman. "Unfortunately Senator Lautenberg didn't realize that he was precluding many more opportunities for LPFM with this amendment, especially to his own state's residents. We'll work with the Senator to revise his position, and allow new, local, New Jersey stations to blossom between the 50,000 watt flamethrowers in the New York-Philly corridor. Lautenberg's amendment certainly proves to us that the corporate lobbyists aren't going to let this go without a fight, but the real communities of America will be working overtime to make sure their legislators, in the Senate and the House, represent them, and bring LPFM to their doorsteps."

Approximately 400 Low Power FM (LPFM) radio stations currently serve communities across the United States. Corporate lobbying interests such as the National Association of Broadcasters have curtailed the expansion of the LPFM service, keeping these non-commercial, completely local stations from being built in all but one of the top 50 markets in the US. If s2505 becomes law, thousands of stations will reach American communities, including at least one to four in most major cities.

To find out more about the Prometheus Radio Project and it's organizers' and allies' efforts to bring diverse, community media to America and the global community, visit <http://www.prometheusradio.org>, or call 215.727.9620.