

WISCONSIN PUBLIC RADIO

A service of the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board and University of Wisconsin-Extension

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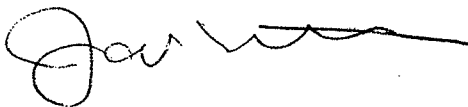
Ms. Donna R. Searcy
Secretary
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications System
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Ms. Searcy:

On behalf of Wisconsin Public Radio, I am pleased to forward for your consideration our comments in the matter of the "Application of SATELLITE CD RADIO, INC. for Authority to Construct, Launch and Operate Space Stations for the Provision of Digital Audio Radio Services."

We are keenly interested in the development of these new technologies, particularly as they provide opportunities for institutions of higher learning to deliver improved educational audio services to diverse segments of the listening public currently underserved by broadcast radio systems.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jack W. Mitchell
Director, Wisconsin Public Radio

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FOR INFORMATION

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Comments to the Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

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OFFICE OF

In the matter of)
the Application of)
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SATELLITE CD RADIO, INC.)
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For Authority to Construct, Launch)
and Operate Space Stations for)
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Radio Services)

File Nos. 49/50-DSS-P/LA-90,
58/59-DSS-AMEND-90,
44/45-DSS-AMEND-92
RM-7400

TO: The Commission

Wisconsin Public Radio is a service of the Wisconsin Educational Communications Board and the University of Wisconsin-Extension. The management of WPR believes that the full potential for public service audio requires access to multiple specialized channels and that emerging digital audio radio services, exemplified by Satellite CD Radio's DARS proposal currently before the Commission, provide an opportunity for institutions of higher learning to deliver improved educational audio services to diverse segments of the listening public.

For very good and logical reasons, public radio stations are narrowing the focus of their broadcast services. They must do so in order to maintain an identity in the increasingly crowded media marketplace--a marketplace that will become even more crowded with the introduction of digital audio alternatives.

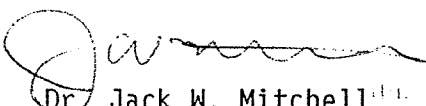
Whereas individual educational broadcasters once provided a few hours a day of a wide variety of content and program formats (classical music, jazz, news, public affairs, continuing education, and programming for various ethnic or linguistic minorities) public radio broadcasters today must usually focus on one or two of the more "popular" program formats to the exclusion of the others. As a result, these services carry less continuing education and "life-long learning" programming than they would prefer and the public interest demands.

The University of Wisconsin's flagship station, WHA Radio, is the "oldest station in the nation," with an unbroken history of providing educational radio services to the listening public since 1917. The Wisconsin Educational Communications Board and Wisconsin Public Radio remain firmly committed to continuing this tradition of providing educational and informational audio programming firmly based in our educational tradition. WPR's current state-wide educational programming service includes distinguished faculty lectures, academic round table discussions, telephone call-in discussions, in-depth interviews, for-credit audio courses, and highly produced features and documentaries in which program content is developed by educators in collaboration with staff producers.

Although such programming is in danger of being crowded out of the public radio system, WPR's educationally based programming continues to be cited for high achievement and to attract significant audiences. We urge the Commission to foster the development of a system of digital audio services that will offer more choices for listeners and provide a place for educational audio in the American marketplace of ideas.

Specifically, we propose that any satellite-based digital audio radio service authorized by the Commission set aside 10 percent of its channel capacity for use by educational institutions. The audio services on these channels, being more specialized than mainstream commercial and non-commercial programming, would provide access to important educational audio programming for diverse audience segments currently underserved by broadcast radio systems.

The advent of digital audio radio services presents an opportunity to provide a full spectrum of audio programming and services to our nation's listening public. Wisconsin Public Radio management feels that educational audio services should be a central feature of these emerging technologies and delivery systems and stands ready to play any active role in realizing this goal. Therefore, we endorse the Satellite CD proposal contingent on a 10% set-aside of channels for use by educational institutions and on favorable economic arrangements for fostering such services.


Dr. Jack W. Mitchell
Director, Wisconsin Public Radio