



The Honorable Jessica Rosenworcel, Chairwoman
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

July 13, 2022

Dear Chair Rosenworcel,

The National Religious Broadcasters (NRB)¹ hereby submits the following reply comments in response to the Commission's Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) concerning regulatory fees for Fiscal Year 2022 (FY 2022).²

The NRB has taken note that the FCC's annual FY 2022 regulatory fees NPRM proposes a staggering 13 percent rate hike in regulatory fees on licensees, despite enlarging its budget by only 2.1 percent.³ We write to concur with comments filed by the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) on July 5, 2022, urging that the FCC reexamine its fee rationale, unburden broadcasters from the costs of broadband-related Commission activities, and exercise its discretion to mitigate the adverse effects of a substantial fee increase.

A fee increase of this magnitude constitutes a significant financial burden on broadcasters who are still recovering from the pandemic. As the NAB notes:

"Broadcasters are required to provide a free service to the public and are dependent on advertising revenues to cover their costs. Unlike other Commission regulatees that thrived during the pandemic all while being able to pass on to consumers their regulatory fee costs, local broadcasters' challenges were exacerbated and further magnified by the pandemic's shocks to the advertising market. The radio industry has not yet fully recovered from the impacts of the pandemic."⁴

As the NAB has demonstrated, this rate hike unlawfully burdens broadcasters with fees for FCC activities that do not benefit their industry. Broadcasters should not be forced to foot the bill for broadband-related Commission activities which offer no benefit to them. Meanwhile, broadband internet service providers (ISPs) both benefit from these Commission activities and have the ability to pass on these costs to the consumer, unlike broadcasters.

¹ NRB is a non-profit membership association headquartered in Washington, D.C., that represents the interests of Christian broadcasters throughout the nation. Since 1944, the mission of NRB has been to help protect and defend the rights of Christian media and to ensure that the channels of electronic communication stay open and accessible for Christian communicators. Our membership includes non-profit, for-profit, commercial, and non-commercial radio and television stations across the United States.

² *Assessment and Collection of Regulatory Fees for Fiscal Year 2022*, Report and Order and Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, MD Docket No. 22-223 (rel. June 2, 2022) (NPRM).

³ Ibid.

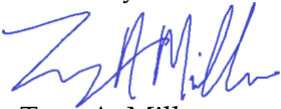
⁴ <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/search/search-filings/filing/1070542690254>

This issue is not new, and the FCC has reversed course from its previous acknowledgement that broadband-related activities do not benefit broadcasters. Last year, the Commission exempted broadcasters from paying fees associated with major broadband-related activities and should reinstate these modifications and work toward expanding the base of payors who benefit from these activities, especially in light of the Commission's request to expand its broadband-related workforce in 2023.

The NAB has proposed measures to mitigate the impact of this rate hike on broadcasters, including adding a fee category for broadband internet service providers, freezing the regulatory fee for broadcasters at a previous level, or capping the fee increase. NRB concurs with the NAB in urging the FCC to take steps to mitigate the impact of fee increases and remedy defects in its regulatory framework that in effect force broadcasters to subsidize benefits for other industries.

We thank you for your attention to the interests of broadcasters in this matter.

Sincerely,



Troy A. Miller
President & CEO