

W5YI

America's Oldest Ham Radio Newsletter

REPORT

Up to the minute news from the world of amateur radio, personal computing and emerging electronics. While no guarantee is made, information is from sources we believe to be reliable.

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FCC Releases NPRM on Low Power, Microradio Broadcasting

"With this Notice of Proposed Rule Making, we explore the possible establishment of new classes of FM radio service to respond to the increasing demand by the public for additional outlets of popular expression which could increase the diversity of voices, views, and sources of information and entertainment available to the American public." [Mass Media Docket No. 99-25, Released: February 3, 1999]

We have now received the actual *Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* on the FCC's intent to establish rules authorizing the operation of new, low power FM (LPFM) broadcast radio stations. Here is a highly digested summary of the 70 page (single spaced) document:

- 1.) ...we are proposing to create two classes of low power radio service ...which would operate in the existing FM radio band: a 1000-watt primary service and a 100-watt secondary service. We also seek comment on whether to establish a third, "microradio" class of low power radio service that would operate in the range of 1 to 10 watts on a secondary basis.
- 2.) These proposals are in response to two petitions [from ham operators: J. Rodger Skinner W4FM, RM-9242 and Nikolaus Leggett N3NL, RM-9208] for rule making and related comments indicating substantial interest in, and public support for, increased citizens' access to the airwaves. We believe that these new LPFM stations would provide a low-cost means of serving urban communities and neighborhoods, as well as populations living in smaller rural towns and communities.
- 3.) As a general matter, we seek comment on whether any new services established should be operated strictly on a non-commercial basis. ...We also welcome commenters to bring to our attention any alternatives or additions to our proposals that would serve our goals of encouraging community participation and the proliferation of local voices, while protecting the integrity of the spectrum.
- 4.) *The Skinner petition* ...proposes the creation of three classes of LPFM service: (1) a "primary" service class with effective radiated power ("ERP") levels from 50 watts to 3 kW for antenna heights above average terrain ("HAAT") up to 100 me-

ters (328 feet), (2) a "secondary" service class with ERP levels up to 50 watts for HAAT values up to 46 meters (150 feet), and (3) a "special event" service up to 20 watts ERP, for which authorizations would be issued for periods not to exceed ten days.

5.) *The Leggett Petition* ...proposes a service limited to one watt of transmitter output power and an antenna height of 50 feet. This "microradio" service would broadcast to very small areas in a cellular arrangement, using a single FM and a single AM channel nationwide, thus limiting the impact on existing radio stations. Petitioner believes such stations would have an appeal for "niche markets" and could establish ties over small areas such as rural towns and urban neighborhoods. ...Leggett modified his proposal to suggest a two-tiered system. The first tier would include low power radio facilities designed for a maximum transmission radius of one mile. Second-tier stations would have a maximum transmission radius of five miles. Ownership would be limited to individuals whose primary residence is within 25 miles of the station and very small businesses and non-profit entities with primary headquarters located within 25 miles of the station. Petitioner suggests that microradio stations should be required to operate only a minimum number of hours per year. Licensees would be permitted to build their own transmitters, not subject to Commission approval.

6.) Small businesses, community groups, cities, and the hundreds of citizens who commented support the creation of a low power radio service... Petitioners and their supporters argue that consolidation has made radio stations too expensive for most individuals, and that because new voices are being priced out of the market, the public is being deprived of diverse, local voices.

7.) The National Association of Broadcasters ("NAB"), National Public Radio ("NPR"), other radio broadcaster organizations, and a number of individual licensees oppose the petitions, claiming that existing radio stations are already serving the

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myriad needs and interests of their communities and must do so in order to remain competitive, thus making low power radio unnecessary.

8.) The Commission said they were "concerned that consolidation may have a significant impact on small broadcasters and potential new entrants into the radio broadcasting business by driving up station prices, thereby exacerbating the difficulty of entering the broadcast industry and of surviving as an independent operator. ...the Commission received over 13,000 inquiries in the last year from individuals and groups showing an interest in starting a low power radio station.

9.) ...it appears that the variety of demands may best be met by more than one station type... For example, a low power station could be designed to operate similar to a full-power station but on a smaller scale, as a service for an ethnic community dispersed throughout an entire city, as a supplementary commercial or noncommercial service, or simply as a low cost community service used principally to convey information to listeners, without concern for financial support.

10.) ...we seek comment on whether a low power radio service could provide new entrants the ability to add their voices to the existing mix of political, social, and entertainment programming, and could address special interests shared by residents of geographically compact areas. Numerous commenters state that alternative sources of information and entertainment are not readily available to dissatisfied speakers and listeners through the acquisition of an existing frequency, leased time from full power stations, an internet website, or internet webcasting, the last three of which do not require a license.

11.) The consistent demand for various forms of low power radio stations, including microradio stations, indicates that many people interested in community broadcasting cannot afford either their own full power stations or whatever limited access to established stations may be available. Moreover, people with non-mainstream interests or unconventional views would have access to the airwaves only with the consent of a full power station owner, which could severely limit their range of expression. We recognize that the internet offers unprecedented opportunities to communicate inexpensively... However, at this time, Internet access [cannot] be considered a substitute for radio broadcasting's capability to reach the public....

12.) A higher power LPFM class with a larger service area would be more likely to attract more listeners, including listeners in vehicles, who account for a significant segment of the listeners of full power radio stations. Authorizing these as primary stations could provide stability that could enable licensees to obtain necessary funding to equip stations of this size and operate them in a manner that could more effectively serve the community....

13.) A lower power, less costly class of LPFM station, with secondary frequency use status and fewer operating and other regulatory requirements than full service broadcasters, might appeal to operators desiring to broadcast to smaller non-mobile audiences, especially if operated at locales where there would be little likelihood of channel displacement. ...stations might not be able to operate on a full-time basis or according to a regular schedule, but might still offer "niche" programming and important community event coverage and news and weather bulletins....

14.) ...we do not intend to create a low power radio service on any spectrum beyond that which is currently allocated for FM

use.... To allocate spectrum not currently used for broadcasting would force consumers to purchase new equipment ...which would likely have a substantial dampening effect on its success.

15.) Although it might be desirable to locate the new low power services on a small number of particular channels, with more than 7,000 stations now licensed on the 100 FM channels, it does not appear possible to designate particular FM frequencies for low power services....

16.) The interference potential and present congestion in the AM band, where many stations currently experience significant interference and degraded reception, make it a poor choice for a new radio service. The propagation characteristics of AM signals could exacerbate the interference potential of low power stations, causing signals to extend long distances, particularly at night. ...We believe that introducing low power stations into any part of the AM spectrum would have a serious negative impact on our efforts to improve the quality of reception in this band.

17.) The FM radio band, 88-108 MHz, is divided into 100 "channels" of 200 kHz each. ...our rules... currently restricts the use of FM channels 201-220 (88-92 MHz) to noncommercial educational broadcasting. ...a noncommercial educational FM broadcast station will be licensed only to a nonprofit educational organization and upon showing that the station will be used for the broadcast of noncommercial educational programming. ...only those noncommercial entities ...would be eligible to apply for and operate LPFM stations in this part of the band, and all operations would have to be strictly noncommercial.

18.) We contemplate that some low power radio stations, like other radio broadcast stations, would want to use auxiliary broadcast frequencies, where available (for example, for studio-to-transmitter links and transmission of remote broadcasts). While use of auxiliary frequencies may not be necessary for very low power stations with limited range, their use might be essential for a larger LPFM class of station. We seek comment on whether all LPFM stations... should be permitted to seek authority to use radio broadcast auxiliary frequencies.

19.) We must decide whether LPFM services, if authorized, would provide and receive interference protection with respect not only to existing, but also to future full-service radio facilities and the effects of such requirements on both the LPFM or micro-radio service and on existing broadcasters.

20.) ...we propose two distinct classes of service: (1) a primary LPFM service class with an ERP limit of 1,000 watts (designated "LP1000.") and (2) a secondary class with an ERP limit of 100 watts (designated "LP100"). We also seek comment on the advisability of establishing a very low power secondary "micro-radio" service with ERP limit of one to ten watts.

21.) **1000-Watt Primary Service ("LP1000")** ...would operate at a maximum effective radiated power ("ERP") of 1000 watts at an antenna height above average terrain ("HAAT") of 60 meters (197 feet) ...Depending on population density, terrain and other relevant factors, such a station could reach a substantial number of listeners. We seek comment on whether this service should be restricted to noncommercial applicants, open to commercial service, or both. We also seek comment on whether the population in these service areas could be large enough to sustain an advertising base. ...A signal range of more than 8 miles should enable service to mobile listeners and to people living on farms or ranches in the vicinity of small rural communities.

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CUTTING EDGE TECHNOLOGY

■ **Tired of photos that turn out too bright or too dim** because the light sensor of the camera focused on the wrong part of the scene? Some of the newer viewfinders include an infra-red LED and an array of sensors. Invisible light is sent into your eye and the sensors determine through reflection exactly what part of the scene you're looking at. The camera's computer automatically determines proper focus and brightness.

■ **Visual Concept Engineering offers pyrotechnic effects for film and video.** They record fire, flame, smoke and explosions onto CD-ROM. Even animations of several seconds are available, as are "explosions" in zero-gravity. This sort of effects compositing is cheaper than filmmakers creating their own pyrotechnics.

■ **A retinal scan used to identify employees or ATM customers may not work** if the person under scan has been drinking alcohol. (By the way, there is an ATM in operation at the bottom of the world in Antarctica.)

■ **A voltage sag of two or three cycles can stop complex manufacturing systems** that involve sensitive telemetry and precision electronic equipment. The Dynamic Voltage Restorer (DVR) developed by Westinghouse controls voltage applied to a load by "filling in the gaps." It determines the needed amplitude, frequency and phase angle. Meant to be used in high-current industrial applications, a DVR takes up the inside of a truck trailer.

■ **Temperature affects nearly everything in electronics.** This includes coax cable. Typical coax loss varies by about one-tenth of one percent for every degree change Fahrenheit.

■ **When the photolithography process for creating integrated circuits was invented** in the 1970's, manufacturers used white light. As the components shrank in size and increased in speed, monochromatic light was required. The spectrum continued to move along from red to blue. Today, the most complex IC's require deep ultraviolet light -- a tricky move, because lasers operating in that range are tough to make. Chips now on the drawing boards may require X-rays.

■ **If you're working on your own circuitry,** don't make the mechanical connection between the semiconductor and

the heat sink too tight. The insulator between them may crack, or the chip itself may break. Is your heat sink too small? Use the five-second rule if you can't keep your finger on the heat sink for five seconds, it's not big enough. Today's IC's give off about 10 times as much heat as a cooking surface of the same size.

■ **Color LCD displays smaller than a dime are becoming popular.** They consume less power than their big brothers but provide good images by viewing through a magnifying lens. This makes them ideal for use in virtual-reality helmet displays and other applications.

■ **High-tech walking shoes produce power** — Scientists at MIT's media laboratory have designed cushioned insole inserts that when walked on, produce enough electricity to power mobile electronics such as computers and wireless phones. The power is produced by harnessing the pressure at the heel and bending of the insole — sort of a modern-day water wheel.

■ **Many large radio stations are converting from analog reel-to-reel tape recorders** to digital sound recorders. They are faster, don't wear out, don't need to be cleaned constantly, and take up less console space.

■ **Digital audio interconnection cables must be extremely well shielded.** They carry lower voltage levels than their audio counterparts, so they are less tolerant of cutting and splicing. These digital cables come with something different, though a bare copper wire to accompany the shield. You can ground this wherever you like without having to take wire cutters to the valuable cable.

■ **The Pentium II microprocessor core voltage is 2.8 volts,** and draws nearly 7 amps of current at 233 Mhz. At 300 MHz, the chip draws over 8 amps and sometimes as much as 14!

■ **We're used to seeing laser light in the form of a plain dot.** RMF Products makes a series of laser diode modules which project a cross-hair pattern. They come in a variety of colors and output powers. The laser diode modules use internal optics to generate the cross-hair image, thus making the laser easier to recognize and aim.

■ **The Shape Tape is a long, thin fiber-optic cable that contains sensors** which monitor the cable's position in all three dimensions. The sensor array connects to a PC and special software lets you

see a 3-D image of the Shape Tape's position. It can monitor data in areas where usual sensors can't fit.

■ **The U.S. military is phasing out cathode-ray tubes (CRTs) on its aviation platforms.** Today's technology demands displays that are lighter and consume less current. The newest displays are just as bright as CRTs, aren't as susceptible to interference, and don't suffer phosphor burn.

■ **The Boston Marathon tracks runners with RF identification I.C.'s** clipped to their shoelaces. No more riding the bus to the finish line!

■ **The simplest and most effective hacker attack is when a potential hacker calls a user on the telephone** and says he is a support technician in need of a password. There is little or no need to provide anyone you do not know with your password, so beware.

■ **Future aircraft could contain built-in test equipment to monitor on-board hardware and software.** If something goes wrong, the aircraft's computer could contact maintenance crews before landing with precise data on the troubled system. Ground crews could then be ready to work on the plane, perhaps even before it gets to the hangar.

■ **Some machine shops now allow their customers to link into their shop network via modem** to see how a project is progressing. Engineers use 3D CAD software to design a part, then transmit manufacturing data through fiber-optic cable to the machines on the shop floor.

■ **Public videoconferencing rooms are a rapidly growing industry.** Rather than investing in all the equipment themselves, corporations that might need to do this only two or three times a year just rent a facility as needed. Other companies just don't want to videoconference because they enjoy traveling and all the perks that go with it.

EMERGING COMMUNICATIONS

■ **BBC to switch foreign broadcasting to the Internet.** The Reuters News Service out of London reports that the British Broadcasting Corporation plans to put its World Service broadcasts on the Internet as part of a \$49 million investment over three years. By 2005, all foreign language BBC World Service will be

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broadcast on the Internet enabling listeners to tune in on their personal computers. The World Service broadcasts in English and 44 other languages to more than 140 million regular listeners. It will continue to maintain a shortwave network, particularly in the lessor-developed and politically sensitive parts of the world. The international radio network plans to broadcast in 12 languages online in both text and audio by 2002. This would make the BBC's World Service the world's leading online news provider.

■ **Broadcast stations with three-letter calls are slowly becoming a thing of the past.** Fewer than 60 AM stations boast such calls, and only about a dozen FM and TV stations have been around long enough to retain three-letter call signs. Buyouts and mergers have phased most of them out.

■ **Apparently Motorola's Iridium LEO satellite-based wireless network is not doing as well as expected.** Five more of its sixty-six satellites have failed ...bringing the total to twelve. And only 3,000 subscribers had signed up as of year end ...far less than the predicted 200,000.

COMPUTER INFO

■ **Apparently Apple plans to stick with the iMac for at least five years.** They signed a huge contract with South Korean manufacturer "LG Electronics Corp." to produce \$10 billion worth of iMacs. Two million iMac computers valued at \$1.5 billion will be produced in 1999 alone. Most will be manufactured in Korea, but some will be made in Britain and Mexico.

■ **The arcade game market has shrunk for the past few years** because home PCs are now powerful enough to emulate the technology in most arcade video games.

■ **Here is a real strange one! One Stop Communication, Inc. (a division of One Stop Car of Florida) said it will give a free iMac PC to 25,000 credit-worthy consumers spending a minimum of \$100 a month in its online mall (which is not constructed yet) over the next three years.** Customers also must use their company as their Internet Service Provider at a cost of \$19.95 per month. That charge is waived if the user spends \$200 in any one month. A couple of words of caution! First, the customer's credit card is charged

\$100 in any month in which the minimum purchase requirement is not met. And second, surfers who check the Website located at <<http://www.shopss.com>> (two "s" in shopss) are strangely redirected to a Website located in Israel.

■ **Worldwide, more than 360 billion pages are faxed every year** from 100 million fax machines. About half a billion e-mail messages are delivered to American homes every day.

■ **Software rental is increasing in popularity.** This is often referred to as "subscription," and software can thus be licensed for months or years. This means lower costs for users and licenses can be renewed.

■ **Coca-Cola is experimenting with a new vending machine** that contains an internal computer. It keeps tabs on how many cans of each type of soda are left inside. When the machine runs low, the computer contacts a nearby warehouse via the Internet and asks for more cans.

■ **Dell Computer Corp. of Round Rock, Texas has reserved the Internet Web address of: "DellAuction.com"** It is rumored that they will be auctioning off PC's on the Internet that come off lease.

■ **The "International Toy Fair" Trade Show closed last week in New York City.** Last year we correctly picked "Furbie — the fuzzy Furbish-talking owl" — to be Christmas 1998's "Toy of the Year".

The under-\$1,000 PC market and increase in home computer penetration is giving rise to a new generation of computer-assisted "smart toys."

Intel's new push into the toy business consists of a new Intel-Play "**X3 Digital Video Microscope**" that magnifies anything and displays the image on a computer screen ...and "**Me2 Cam**" — a digital camera atop a PC that captures kids' video or still images and transfers them into a cartoon-like environment, creating a kind of live TV fantasy. They will be distributed by Mattel and both will be big sellers during the Fall-1999 selling season

But we think for "Christmas 1999 Toy-of-the-Year" we are going with start-up Zowie Entertainment Inc.'s "PlayZones." So far, only toy buyers know about it. "PlayZones" allows kids to manipulate characters traditionally or in a three-dimensional play space generated on their PCs by a CD-ROM.

The figurines and playsets are plugged into the PC and proceed through virtual

adventures created by the CD on the monitor. Children manipulate the toy's arms and legs which replace the PC keyboard and mouse. The Zowie PlayZone will be available this fall at a retail around \$50-\$60. System requirements: Windows 95, Pentium 133, 16MB RAM, 20MB free hard disk space and a 4x CD-ROM drive. Three playsets are initially planned.

"**Redbeards Pirate Quest**" — brings to life a toy pirate ship with a virtual world on the computer that kids can explore.

"**Muppets from Space**" — Based on a new movie coming out, Gonzo the Great, Rizzo the Rat, and Kermit the Frog explore wacky worlds, and;

"**Ellie's Enchanted Garden**" — brings to life a backyard playset with Ellie, Monkey, Pig and Giraffe figurines.

In its first year of operation, Zowie Entertainment of San Mateo, California is a brand new toy company that was spun out of Paul Allen's "think tank" *Interval Research Company* ...a firm that focuses on high-tech mass market products.

Interval researchers are pursuing innovations in such fields as: Signal Computation, Tangible Interfaces, Human Studies, Reconfigurable Computing, Demographic/Lifestyle Studies, New Media Experiments, Home Media Tools, Portable/Wearable Devices, Digital Home Entertainment Systems, Electro-optic and Mechatronic Design, Social/Domestic Communication, and New Graphic Architecture.

Paul Allen, you will remember, is the computer programmer who teamed up with Bill Gates in the mid-1970's to write the original version of Microsoft DOS. A multi-billionaire, Allen is still Microsoft's second largest stockholder. And it was he who poured the big start-up bucks into Zowie Entertainment. They are located on the Web at: <www.zowiepower.com>

Zowie's management team contains the creator of Pong, as well as executives from Hasbro, Time Warner, Apple Computer and Ph.D.s from Stanford University's Knowledge Systems Laboratory who know the toy and computer business! We don't think it can miss! Time will tell.

■ **The original Windows 1.0 development team had two dozen programmers.** The current Windows development team has almost one thousand.

■ **A college campus computer network lets students receive and send messages while they are on the phone.** College staff can communicate campus-wide messages to all students at any time, such as "classes canceled due to snow." Students can also e-mail home, rather than

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call long-distance.

■ **JPEG was designed to compress photographic images for transmission purposes.** It is not optimized for compressing images of documents, however, because printed pages contain many sharp transitions from white to black. Most photographs do not. Graphics files in TIF and BMP formats often compress files by more than 90%, and are therefore better to use for uploading and downloading.

■ **FacIT DB from Visionics Corp. is software that examines video of crowd scenes** and uses a database to pick out individual faces. It can work on real video in real time and actually pick out a particular person in a sold-out stadium, for instance. It matches faces. Law enforcement can therefore look for wanted criminals in large places such as malls.

INTERNET NEWS

■ **AT&T wants to eventually be the No. 1 Internet online provider.** Here is how they plan to do it. "@Home" is a company that was started by a group of competing cable companies to provide broadband Internet access via cable TV lines. The coaxial cable that runs to your house offers much more "bandwidth" than the phone line and is thus more suited to bring you much faster Internet access. More than half of @Home's voting stock is owned by TCI, the nation's largest cable company. TCI is being bought by AT&T. So, essentially @Home will soon be owned by AT&T and a group of cable companies. @Home has announced the purchase of major web portal "Excite" and WorldNet, AT&T's narrowband dial-up Internet provider. This move will put it in a direct competition with America On Line (AOL).

■ **Cyber coupons are on the way!** America Online is in the process of entering into a deal with SuperMarkets Online to become a distributor of "Web Bucks." Users key in their zip code to find stores that participate in their area. Then a "Valupage" list of bar-coded coupons appears which can be printed out. You are paid in "Web Bucks" when you purchase items on the list which can be used as cash on your next purchase. Try it out for yourself now at: <www.valupage.com>

■ In a complex stock swap, **television's USA Network is merging with Web search portal Lycos and Ticketmaster Online City Search.** The new name will

be the "USA/Lycos Interactive Network." The USA Network owns the Home Shopping Network which also has additional e-commerce sites. USA/Lycos will reach 70% of all US television households and 50% of all Internet users. The USA Network is owned by media mogul Barry Diller who will become CEO of USA/Lycos. The USA/Lycos consolidation joins Excite that recently combined with the Athome Network and Netscape that was bought by America OnLine.

■ **IBM has launched its new secure technology that lets record companies distribute music on the Internet.** Unlike MP-3, IBM's "Madison" format can't be downloaded free from the Web. Most of the major record companies are testing the new format. Consumers with cable modems will be able to choose music from up to 2,000 albums that, after payment, can be downloaded and saved onto recordable CDs which can be played on a PC or regular stereo.

MP3, or Motion Picture Experts Group, audio layer 3, is an audio format widely used by music fans online. And MP3 — a near CD-quality compressed file format — is now the de facto standard for sending music across the Web.

There are firms that legally sell MP3 music across the Internet. But the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) is opposed to the format saying that it encourages illegal copying and online distribution. There are tons of copyrighted MP3 music files on the Internet which can be downloaded free. The main benefit of digital distribution is that you don't have to go to a record store to buy music.

■ **If your favorite Internet domain name has already been claimed,** there's a chance you may get it later. Sometimes people forget to pay the registration fee and that web address therefore becomes available again!

■ **Remember Prodigy? Well, it is back with a new look, a new direction and a new CEO.** Will it be another Internet rags-to-riches story? Actually it never went away. It just has languished due to lack of promotion while AOL took off. Five years ago, Prodigy had more than 2 million subscribers — double that of America Online.

The *Prodigy Information Service* was founded in 1984 as a joint venture of International Business Machines, Sears, Roebuck & Co. and CBS Corp. But the service had problems and bled red ink for

years. It was eventually sold to an investor group for \$250 million which included members of its management team ...and more recently to a Mexican telecommunications holding company Carso Global Telecom, part of the empire of Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim.

Prodigy had been concentrating on getting the Web going in other countries. Now it wants to expand back into the burgeoning U.S. market. It will refocus on Web connections rather than online content. Prodigy's main asset is a very good national network that covers 600 U.S. cities in all 50 states, meaning 83 percent of the U.S. population can access Prodigy services with a local telephone call.

In December, Prodigy Communications Corp. appointed David Trachtenberg as its new President and Chief Operating Officer. Trachtenberg had been Executive Director of Online Marketing at MCI WorldCom, heading up the company's residential and small business Internet operations. But when MCI was forced to sell its Internet assets as a condition to merge with Worldcom, Trachtenberg signed on with Prodigy.

Based in White Plains, New York, Prodigy reportedly has less than 700,000 total subscribers, a fraction of AOL's 15 million customers. Most do not get the in-house created "Prodigy Classic" content.

At the end of 1996, Prodigy had more than 800,000 "Classic" subscribers. Prodigy has now told its remaining 200,000 "Classic" customers that it is shutting down the "Classic" service in October due to "Y2K" (Year 2000) computer problems. These customers will then be folded into Prodigy Communications Corp., its Internet Service Provider (ISP) operation with online content being supplied by Web portal, Excite, Inc.

Prodigy will begin a massive marketing campaign and has already entered into an agreement with Staples, Inc. to offer the Prodigy-Excite online service in all 700 of its office superstores. Customers will be charged \$14.95 per month for Internet access, payable quarterly.

After losing more than \$275 million since mid-1996, Prodigy made an initial public stock offering (8 million shares at \$15) on February 10th and raised \$120 million which will be used for expansion. (Nasdaq: PRGY) Prodigy is primarily looking for future growth among the 28 million Americans of Hispanic descent.

On February 11th, its first day of trading, Prodigy zoomed to \$32 before closing at 28-1/8 — a gain of 88%! See: <<http://prodigy.excite.com/>>

■ **But it looks like MCI Worldcom is indeed going back into the Internet online/access business.** They will have to start again from scratch since they were forced to sell their former Internet operations to the Great Britain's Cable and Wireless Co. for \$1.75 billion.

They will use online content from America Online's CompuServe unit. Cost will be billed at \$16.95 a month when online customers use MCI Worldcom's long-distance service ...\$19.95 if they don't. MCI Worldcom provides the network for both AOL's 15 million and its CompuServe unit's 2 million subscribers.

■ **Microsoft's new Internet Explorer Browser - Version 5.0** is currently in Beta testing. Apparently it is going to be a winner since ZDNET called it the "Perfect Browser." They said it was "...slicker, faster, easier-to-use version of IE4, with dozens of tiny improvements and a reorganized interface that collectively makes everyday tasks easier." The beta version of IE5 was released for public testing a month ago and demand for the Internet Explorer 5-beta release has been more than double that of the IE4 public beta release. Approximately 600,000 people have downloaded the IE5 beta version.

■ **Rippers, Encoders, Players, and Direct Downloads** is the new lingo of the audiophile. The MP3 digital music format packs large audio 30 MB (three minute song) files into a megabyte and can be downloaded in less than a minute.

More than 15 million MP3 software players, which work with your Web browser, have now been downloaded from the Web. Lycos recently put up a MP3 database <<http://mp3.lycos.com/>> that lists 500,000 MP3 songs available for downloading. Top 25 MP3 sites are listed at: <<http://members.spree.com/sip/toplist/>>

The MP3 file format can be used to copy songs from a music CD and post them to the Internet and illegal music copies are everywhere. In fact, <<http://come.to/mp3addiction>> has posted for downloading, 17 of the current top 20 U.S. singles.

Just about any computer will play MP3 music but a PC with a Pentium or comparable processor is recommended. MP3 software players such as FreeAmp, WinAmp and Sonique are available for free or as shareware at just about every Web site that offers MP3 music.

Recording songs from a music CD into MP3 files requires two additional software programs: a ripper for extracting music from the CD and an encoder for putting

the music into MP3 format. Most MP3 sites have rippers and encoders available for download.

WASHINGTON WHISPERS

■ **One politician definitely not in favor of establishing a Low Power FM broadcast radio service is Rep. Billy Tauzin, Republican of Louisiana.** (See lead story, page 1) Tauzin is the top Republican overseeing telecommunications policy. He chairs the powerful House Commerce Committee's communications subcommittee.

Tauzin believe the plan to establish what could be thousands of small "microradio" stations on the FM broadcast dial "...would reduce the audience and advertising revenue of current stations and possibly create severe interference." He said "The FCC is an agency out of control that demands congressional action to straighten it out." Tauzin said he planned to introduce legislation to revamp the agency's structure and powers.

FCC Chairman William Kennard urged Tauzin to talk to the educational, religious and community groups that support the microradio plan before opposing the idea. "There is enough room for the voices of churches, schools, and neighborhood groups as well as established radio companies." (Reported by Reuters, Feb. 11)

■ **The FCC is thinking about letting the caller pay for inbound mobile phone calls** rather than the recipient. Since the receiver of the wireless handheld or car phone call pays for the call, many users switch off their phone to avoid having to pay for unwanted calls. In most areas of the world, it is the caller who foots the bill. Speaking at a trade show, FCC Chairman has asked the wireless industry to work with the FCC to bring about the change. "It's time for us to find a way to implement a calling party pays system," he said, adding that only five percent of all calls are now made on wireless phones. One issue that the FCC will have to tackle is what charges will be levied on calls to a mobile within a "free" local calling area.

■ **Internet users (and the FCC) are constantly bombarded with e-mail messages alerting them to (or inquiring about) the possibility of having to pay per-minute charges** to their Internet service provider (ISPO) to access the Internet through their local telephone

company.

Some of the messages being circulated ask the recipient to send an e-mail message to the FCC: isp@fcc.gov. This mailbox was established two years ago prior to the FCC making a final ruling on "Access Charge Reform."

In fact, the Commission has received so many inquiries about "per minute charges", that they send an automated reply response entitled "Local telephone companies charging additional fees" to anyone that sends an e-mail addressed to that mailbox. Here is what it says:

"This is a automated response to the message you sent isp@fcc.gov. We established this mailbox for informal comments about usage of the public switched telephone network by Internet access and information service providers for a proceeding on this matter in 1997."

"If you are responding to a message stating that local phone companies have asked the FCC for permission to impose per-minute charges for Internet access, please be aware that this information is out of date. The FCC decided in May 1997 NOT to allow imposition of Interstate access charges on Internet service providers. There is no comment period currently open in this proceeding."

Follows are some quotes from the final Order in Common Carrier Docket No. 96-262 "Access Charge Reform" that was adopted May 7, 1997.

"The FCC decided in the 1983 Access Charge Reconsideration Order that, although information service providers (ISPs) may use local exchange carriers [LECs are the local telephone companies] to originate and terminate interstate calls, ISPs should not be required to pay interstate access charges."

"In recent years, usage of interstate information services, and in particular the Internet and other interactive computer networks, has increased significantly."

"We conclude that the existing pricing structure for ISPs should remain in place, and incumbent LECs will not be permitted to assess interstate per-minute access charges on ISPs. We think it possible that had access rates applied to ISPs over the last 14 years, the pace of development of the Internet and other services may not have been so rapid."

"Maintaining the existing pricing structure for these services avoids disrupting the still-evolving information services industry and advances the goals of the 1996 Act to 'preserve the vibrant and competitive free market that presently

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exists for the Internet and other interactive computer services, unfettered by Federal or State regulation.' We decide here that ISPs should not be subject to interstate access charges."

"...we adopt in this Order our earlier tentative conclusion that incumbent LECs may not assess interstate access charges on information service providers (ISPs). We find that our existing policy promotes the development of the information services industry, advances the goals of the 1996 [Telecom] Act, and creates significant benefits for the economy and the American people."

■ **The Japanese government is threatening to punish financial institutions that fail to adequately prepare for the Y2K bug.** Only 2 of the top 19 banks have completed 75% of the needed updates.

Russia is in much worse shape.

They need \$3 billion from the West to tackle the Y2K problem. The worry is that Russia's nuclear arsenal, ...energy, defense and radar systems and telecommunications networks will cause problems. Russia is so far behind, that there is no way that they can catch up. A Pentagon team of scientists have been dispatched to Moscow to work with Russia to head off system shut downs ...and the ultimate millennium disaster, an inadvertent nuclear attack.

■ **When does the 21st Century begin?** If you said January 1, 2000, you would be wrong. Actually the new millennium starts on January 1, 2001. This is based on the fact that a millennium is 1000 years and the second 1000 years will not be up until December 31, 2000. But no one seems to care! There will be wild parties scheduled for January 1, 2000 regardless of the details. People seem to have gotten the Year 2000 millennium bug mixed up with when the 21st Century really begins.

■ **It doesn't look like the Clinton proposal to require the nation's 1209 commercial TV stations to pay a total of \$200 million in new spectrum fees is going to fly.** Key congressmen are calling the spectrum fee, a "new business tax" and oppose it. The "analog spectrum lease fee" is included in the administration's federal budget for next year. Under the Clinton budget, broadcasters would be required to pay the annual fee until the transition to digital TV is complete at which time they return their analog channels to the federal government for auctioning.

AMATEUR RADIO

■ **There appears to be a difference of opinion regarding the status of frequency coordination in Oklahoma.**

Hal Deitz, WB9VMY had been the Oklahoma frequency coordinator for the past two years. According to Deitz, "My term with the old frequency coordination organization, the Oklahoma Repeater Society, Inc. (ORSI) expired last October."

He said "The ORSI leadership failed to have its summer and winter meetings as required by the bylaws and has failed to appoint a new coordinator." Furthermore, Deitz said "The president disappeared without a trace."

Deitz has now apparently formed a new coordination organization called the Oklahoma Repeater Coordination Group (ORCG) and has established a website at <<http://www.rass.org/orcg/>>. He said the ORCG is continuing on where ORSI left off. "I have remained the Frequency Coordinator for Oklahoma since October of last year and will continue as the frequency coordinator for Oklahoma."

But the *National Frequency Coordination Council's* version is quite different. NFCC President Dick Isely, W9GIG maintains that ORSI is alive and well. He said Hal Deitz is no longer the coordinator and that his 'Oklahoma Repeater Group' is not currently recognized by anybody.

"The new ORSI leaders want to work with the rest of us. But they have a very big job of regaining the confidence and support of all the Oklahoma repeater owners and their new coordinator is brand new." Isely announced the new Oklahoma Repeater Society officers as: Mike McFarland, N5WNT - President; Merlin Griffin, WB5OSM - Vice President; David Land, KD5FX - Secretary; John Brassfield, N5SAM- Treasurer; and Ed Jennings, KB5UKV - Coordinator.

■ **The FCC said that over 12,000 amateurs obtained "Vanity" amateur radio station call signs last year.** 2,213 were filed using the FCC Form 610-V paper application. More than 80% (9,939) were applied for electronically over the FCC's interactive Website. In January 1999, there were 175 paper "Vanity" call sign applications with another 1,242 being electronically filed.

■ **Ham radio's best known operator, Jordan's King Hussein JY1, died February 7th.** He was 63. His son,

Abdullah, 37, succeeds him. Hussein was a life member of the ARRL. Hussein had been active in recent months from the U.S. while seeking cancer treatment at Minnesota's Mayo Clinic. All members of the Jordanian royal family automatically have Amateur Radio privileges in Jordan. Although the new king does not appear to have a call sign, Hussein's widow -- the American-born Queen Noor is JY1NH. King Hussein's brother, the former Crown Prince Hassan, is JY2HT, while his cousin, Prince Raad, JY2RZ, is chairman of the Royal Jordan Radio Amateur Society.

[Thanks: ARRL]

■ **A Bill has been introduced into the Texas State Legislature** by State Rep Patricia Gray, at the request of Karl Silverman, President of the Johnson Space Center Amateur Radio Club. H.B. No. 1345 seeks to add the wording of PRB-1 to Texas law. It reads:

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED AN ACT relating to municipal or county regulation on the placing, screening, or height of amateur radio antennas.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF TEXAS

SECTION 1. Chapter 250, Local Government Code, is amended by adding Section 250.002 to read as follows

Sec. 250.002. REGULATION OF AMATEUR RADIO ANTENNAS. (a) A municipality or county may not enact or enforce an ordinance or order that does not comply with the ruling of the Federal Communications Commission in "Amateur Radio Preemption, 101 FCC 2nd 952 (1985)" or a regulation related to amateur radio service adopted under 47 C.F.R. Part 97.

(b) If a municipality or county adopts an ordinance or order involving the placement, screening, or height of an amateur radio antenna based on health, safety, or aesthetic conditions, the ordinance or order must

(1) reasonably accommodate amateur communications; and

(2) represent the minimal practicable regulation to accomplish the municipality's or county's legitimate purpose.

■ **The Wireless Privacy Enhancement Act of 1999, HR514, has been introduced** by Rep Heather Wilson of New Mexico. The measure is aimed at amending the Communications Act of 1934 "to strengthen and clarify prohibitions on electronic eavesdropping, and for other purposes."

HR514 is identical to the amended version of HR2369 that would have

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banned most types of scanners and scanner listening. The bill's sponsor, Rep. Billy Tauzin, worked with the ARRL and representatives of manufacturers, public service organizations, and scanner enthusiasts to redraft the bill top to bottom.

HR514 forbids manufacturing or modifying scanners to receive cellular, PCS, or "protected" paging service frequencies. The bill also forbids receiving, divulging, publicizing, or utilizing such communication. Amateur Radio appears to be unaffected by the new bill. A copy of the bill is available on the Web at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>. [Thanks: ARRL]

■ **Recent and future developments in amateur radio satellites will be presented** at the 17th Space Symposium and AMSAT-NA annual meeting, October 8-11. The meeting will be held in San Diego, California, at the Hanalei Hotel. A tentative agenda includes the Space Symposium all day Friday, October 8, and Saturday, October 9. There will be a satellite session for beginners Friday evening and the annual banquet will be Saturday evening. An IARU satellite meeting will be held Sunday morning, October 10, followed by the AMSAT-NA board meeting Sunday afternoon and all day Monday, October 11. Further details will be available later this year. The call for papers will be made later this month and registration forms will be available in July. Additional information will be posted on the AMSAT-NA web page at <http://www.amsat.org>. [Thanks: AMSAT-NA]

■ **The FCC has sent violation notices to two hams** who had used their stations to engage in illegal shortwave broadcasting on 6955 kHz. Cited were Henry L. Landsberg, WB6MEU, (Advanced Class) of Sierra Madre, California and Richard F. Jurrens, KC5RGK, (Technician) of Katy, Texas. Also charged were two non-hams. Landsberg and Jurrens were both cited for operating on a frequency not authorized by their Amateur Service licenses. In both cases, the Commission used radio direction-finding techniques to track the source of the 6955 kHz music transmissions. Landsberg and Jurrens both admitted that they had been responsible for the shortwave music transmissions broadcasted from their homes. Jurrens was charged with operating a station identified as 'Rock It Radio.' The FCC noted that civil penalties for unlicensed operation can reach \$11,000 coupled with forfeiture of equipment used. Unlicensed operators also face criminal fines of up to \$100,000 and could be sent to prison.

■ **The FCC has assigned RM-9404 to a rulemaking petition** from the American Radio Relay League's petition aimed at creating new low-frequency amateur allocations at 136 kHz and 160-190 kHz. The League has proposed permitting CW, SSB, RTTY, data, and image emissions for amateurs in a 2.1-kHz the sliver band from 135.7 to 137.8 kHz and in a 30-kHz segment from 160 to 190 kHz. The 135.7 to 137.8 kHz band adheres to the European CEPT band plan.

■ **The only SAREX flight scheduled for 1999 has been delayed** yet again until mid July. According to NASA the STS-93 shuttle mission of the orbiter Discovery mission has been bumped until July 9th because of problems with the Chandra X-Ray observatory experiment. Schools on the SAREX schedule to have students talk to the astronauts using ham radio have been notified of the schedule change. [SAREX, ARRL, Newslines]

■ In D-X, the International Telecommunication Union has allocated the call-sign prefix E4 for use by Palestine. **Accordingly, Palestine will be added to the DXCC List** effective as of next October 1st. Contacts made with the E4 prefix stations after February 1st, 1999, will count for this new DXCC entity. Under DXCC rules, contacts with the deleted entity of Palestine made prior to June 30, 1968, will not count for credit. This is because there is no commonality of territory or administration between the two entities. [DXCC, Newslines]

■ **Rafael M. Estévez, WA4ZZG, president of the Miami-based International Society of Amateur Radio Operators (SIRA)** has issued a news bulletin about the existence of the Colombian Center for Information.

Amateur Radio Operators are attempting to assist interested parties in the USA in determining the status of their relatives and loved ones in Armenia, Colombia and other areas affected by the massive earthquake that took place this past January 25th.

ATT and BellSouth have donated 10 telephone lines and two additional lines for communication via Internet and Fax. Volunteers — many of whom are students from the Florida International University and the University of Miami — are answering incoming calls to (305) 805-5550 at the Colombian Center for Information.

These volunteers have access to all the available lists of victims who have been killed or injured, which have been prepar-

ed by sources of absolute credibility within the Colombian Government.

If anyone cannot be contacted by telephone within the affected areas, SIRA through its Emergency Net of Amateur Radio Operators, will try to locate the survivor. Once the information is obtained, the volunteers in Miami will provide it to the party who initiated the call.

■ **The Radio Society of Great Britain advises that a reunion of radio amateurs** who served in the Radio Security Service during the Second World War is planned. Some 2,000 amateurs were employed by the highly secret body to intercept German messages. "Noz" King, G3ASE, wishes to hear from fellow RSS amateurs who would like to attend the reunion on the 16th of May.

■ **Australia's Coast Radio Service has closed down its CW operation.**

This was the last Morse Transmission:
CQ CQ CQ DE VIM/VIS/VIT
VIM/VIS/VIT VIM/VIS/VIT = THIS IS THE FINAL MORSE TRANSMISSION FROM THE TELSTRA MARITIME COMMUNICATIONS NETWORK. WE CONCLUDE OUR FINAL CW WATCHKEEPING AFTER 87 YEARS OF CONTINUOUS SERVICE WITH PRIDE AND SADNESS. TELSTRA, THE AUSTRALIAN MARITIME SAFETY AUTHORITY AND THE BUREAU OF METEOROLOGY WISH ALL SEAFARERS FAIR WINDS AND FOLLOWING SEAS. ON BEHALF OF THE COUNTLESS SOULS WHO WOULD HAVE DIED BUT FOR THEM, WE SALUTE ALL WHO HAVE SERVED OUR PROFESSION WITH SKILL AND DEDICATION THROUGH THE YEARS.
735 = 31ST JAN 1999 2359UTC SK
— Transcribed off 500kHz at 01 Feb 1999 0005 to 0011UTC by Gavin Reibelt. [Reported by Australia's QNews]

■ **The FCC has suspended the HF operating privileges of Walter P. Miller, Jr., W2YEE** (Advanced Class) of Edison, New Jersey for a period of six months. In a letter to Miller, the FCC's Riley Hollingsworth said that on Feb. 4th and 5th "...you were apparently broadcasting and talking to no particular station for several hours, during which time you prevented the use of the frequencies by others and maliciously interfered with other stations attempting to use the frequencies." Hollingsworth said that Miller was previously warned about this type of operation. Miller is prohibited from operating below 30 MHz until August 16th unless he files a protest with the Commission.

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(Continued from Page 2, LPFM)

22.) **100-Watt Secondary Service ("LP100")** ...would be intended to meet the demand of people who would like to broadcast affordably to communities of moderate size (whether standing alone in rural areas or as part of a larger urban area).

...LP100 service [would] operate as a secondary service at maximum facilities of 100 watts ERP and 30 meters (98 feet) HAAT. This combination would produce a ...signal contour at a distance of 5.6 kilometers (3.5 miles) from the station. ...They would not be permitted to cause interference within the protected service contours of existing and future primary stations, nor would they be protected from interference from these stations.

23.) **1-10 Watt Secondary "Microradio" Service** ...would be intended to allow an individual or group of people with very limited means to construct a broadcast facility and permit them to reach listeners within the confines of a very localized setting. This service would operate with a maximum antenna height of 30 meters HAAT (and no minimum HAAT) and ERP levels in the range of one to ten watts. These values would produce a ...signal contour at distances of about 1.8 kilometers to 3.2 kilometers (1-2 miles), depending on the ERP level. ...Clearly, microstations would offer only very limited coverage, such as for schools, small neighborhoods, subdivisions, or town centers. ... Construction costs for such a broadcasting apparatus could be quite low, potentially in the hundreds of dollars for some facilities.

24.) If we adopt a microradio service, we believe there should be an FCC transmitter certification requirement. We are vitally concerned that such stations meet transmitter out-of-channel emission limits and other standards related to interference protection of stations on adjacent channels. We note that uncertified equipment has on numerous occasions caused dangerous interference to aviation frequencies. We do not believe that a certification requirement would overly burden small operators, given the recent streamlining of our certification procedures.

25.) If we were to establish a microradio class, we would envision it as being secondary to all other FM radio services, including LP100 stations. Microradio stations would be required to protect all existing and future primary stations against co-channel and 1st-adjacent channel interference, as well as FM translator and boosters, and would not receive protection from these stations. Interference protection to these services would be based on minimum distance separations. We expect that many microstations could be located on this basis. ...We also seek comment on the extent to which a very low power service would adversely affect full power stations...

26.) We invite comment on the merits of a very low power "microradio" class of LPFM service. While we are cognizant that many commenters believe that one watt would be insufficient power for any LPFM service, we include it in our proposal to allow additional comment. We are uncertain whether the service would be more feasible at a somewhat higher power level, such as 10 watts ERP. Commenters should weigh the possible benefits and possible adverse impact of microradio stations and should consider appropriate distance separations to govern interference protection for such stations. If we were to adopt a microradio stations class, should such stations be required to protect each other against interference?

27.) FM broadcast channels have a bandwidth of 200 kHz. The center frequency of each channel is 100 kHz ...each channel swings in frequency from the center frequency toward the channel edges, and has its radiated power envelope shaped

such that virtually all of the energy of the signal is contained within the channel. The potential for interference could be further reduced if LPFM stations operated with a reduced bandwidth, creating additional frequency separation to adjacent channels. ...We seek comment on the effectiveness of reduced bandwidth as an alternative means of interference protection...

28.) We see the increased opportunity for entry, enhanced diversity, and new program services as the principal benefits of a new low power service. These goals may be hard, if not impossible, to achieve if LPFM stations are made available to existing broadcasters, or if a number of the new LPFM facilities in an area are under common control. ...we tentatively conclude that strict local and cross-ownership restrictions would be appropriate for the low power radio service. ...we propose not to permit a person or entity with an attributable interest in a full power broadcast station to have any ownership interest in any LPFM (or microradio) station in any market, and to prohibit joint sales agreements, time brokerage agreements, local marketing or management agreements, and similar arrangements between full power broadcasters and low power radio entities.

29.) Unlicensed radio operators not only violate the longstanding statutory prohibition against unlicensed broadcasting and our present rules on unlicensed broadcasting, but they also use equipment of unknown technical integrity. Such illegal radio transmissions raise a particular concern because of the potential for harmful interference to authorized radio operations, including public safety communications and aircraft frequencies. ...The Commission has repeatedly urged all unlicensed radio operators to cease broadcasting. When they have not, we have filed complaints in federal district courts to shut them down by seeking: (1) injunctive relief; (2) seizure and forfeiture of the radio station equipment; (3) monetary forfeitures; and/or (4) criminal penalties. In addition, we have issued cease and desist orders to a number of unlicensed broadcasters. Nevertheless, despite repeated warnings by Commission officials and the Commission's successes in federal district court litigation, some unlicensed broadcasters have persisted in their unlawful activity. Parties who persist in unlawful operation after the Commission has taken any of these enforcement actions could be deemed *per se* unqualified, and we seek comment as to the eligibility of such parties for a license in any new radio service. We seek comment on whether there are circumstances under which such a party could be considered rehabilitated. The reliability as licensees of parties who may have illegally operated for a time but have ceased operation after being advised of an enforcement action, however, is not necessarily as suspect. We seek comment on the propriety of accepting as licensees of low power (or microradio) licenses parties who may have broadcast illegally but have promptly ceased operation when advised by the Commission to do so, or who voluntarily cease operations within ten days of the publication of the summary of this *Notice* in the *Federal Register*.

30.) We seek comment on whether to impose a minimum local origination requirement on any of the three proposed classes of LPFM service, as proposed by some commenters. Listeners benefit from local programming, since it often reflects needs, interests, circumstances, or perspectives that may be unique to that community... we are inclined to give low power (and microradio) licensees the same discretion as full-power licensees to determine what mix of local and nonlocal programming will best serve the community.

31.) LP1000 stations may need to generate revenue in order to

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remain operational. Some LP100 stations might sell some form of advertising to subsidize their operation and could possibly provide a useful advertising alternative for certain types of neighborhood businesses that cannot utilize full-power radio stations due to their expense and their broader geographic targeting. ...noncommercial licensees might attempt to seek underwriting funds from neighborhood groups and businesses.

32.) We expect the very nature of LP100 and microradio stations will ensure that they serve the public. Therefore, we are disinclined to put the burdens of complying with specific programming requirements on these licensees, particularly given the size of the operations we envision and the simplicity we are striving for in this service. We seek comment on this issue...

33.) With respect to LP100 and microradio stations, however, a combination of their lesser spectrum utilization, the nature of the anticipated licensees and their services, and practical enforcement concerns suggests at this time that a minimum operating schedule should not be established unless and until it is shown to be necessary.

34.) We believe that LP100 and microradio stations should be able to be constructed in much less time [than LP1000 stations] and propose an eighteen-month construction limit for LP100 stations and a twelve-month limit for microradio stations.

35.) We ask commenters whether we should adopt a call sign system that would identify a low power radio station as such.

36.) LPFM and microradio applications [would be required to] be filed electronically. We intend that a substantial number of people would be able to locate and afford to construct LP1000 and LP100 stations, and would expect that an even greater number would be able to do so for microradio stations. Moreover, we have seen concrete evidence of significant interest from members of the public who want to start their own LPFM and microradio stations. As a result, we expect to receive a great number of applications, should the new service be authorized. For each application, the Commission would have to determine whether the frequency requested is available and whether it is mutually exclusive with any other application. We note that Internet access is becoming more common, and that interested parties will almost certainly have access to the internet at their homes, public libraries, or other publicly accessible places. We seek comment on both the utility and propriety of a mandatory electronic filing system for LPFM and microradio...

37.) Without electronic filing, the Commission lacks the resources to promptly accomplish the necessary data entry for hundreds or thousands of LPFM (and, possibly, microradio) applications. Accordingly, we propose to develop an electronic filing system for LPFM (and microradio) whereby applicants would submit their applications by e-mail. We may be able to develop a system whereby the application could first be analyzed against existing facilities and, perhaps, even against previously filed applications. Such a system could then promptly inform the filer whether the requested frequency is available and if the application is acceptable for filing based on current data.

38.) We are proposing to adopt a processing system with short windows of only a few days each for the filing of applications. ...We also request comment on the optimal duration of any window that might be adopted.

39.) **Filing of Comments and Reply Comments.** ...interested parties may file comments on or before April 12, 1999, and reply

comments on or before May 12, 1999. Comments may be filed using the Commission's *Electronic Comment Filing System* (ECFS) or by filing paper copies. Comments filed through the ECFS can be sent as an electronic file via the Internet to <<http://www.fcc.gov/e-file/ecfs.html>> [Proceeding number is 99-25.]

Parties who choose to file by paper must file an original and four copies of each filing. All filings must be sent to the Commission's Secretary, Magalie Roman Salas, Office of the Secretary, TW-A306, Federal Communications Commission, 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20554.

The Commissioners issued separate statements:

Chairman William E. Kennard and Commissioner Gloria Tristani said: "As we've traveled around the country we've talked to lots of people who want to use the airwaves, to speak to their communities -- churches, community groups, elementary schools, universities, small businesses, and minority groups. They see -- as we do -- that the airwaves are a great natural resource, and the creation of a low power radio service could provide an effective way for more people to use this resource. ...we cannot deny opportunities to those who want to use the airwaves to speak to their communities simply because it might be inconvenient for those who already have these opportunities.

Commissioner Susan Ness said "This Notice of Proposed Rulemaking describes three low power FM services that could provide a means to give a public voice to individuals and entities currently not able to participate in our broadcasting system. We are seeking comment on whether to authorize any or all of these new services. By doing so, we may enable students, community organizations, and those underrepresented in conventional broadcasting to provide programming of special interest to small and niche populations."

Commissioner Michael K. Powell said: "I support issuance of this Notice of Proposed Rulemaking looking toward creation of low power radio service. Many have called upon us to consider a new low power class of service as a means of opening opportunities in radio broadcasting for new entrants. Others contend that authorizing low power services will facilitate "community radio" designed to serve currently unmet information needs. These are worthy goals and we should consider whether we can authorize such services.

Commissioner Harold W. Furchtgott-Roth dissented: "I am not opposed to the creation of a low power radio service. Whatever new service can be provided within the range of existing interference regulations would be something worth considering. I do not believe that we should create new stations at the expense of current interference protection standards, however. Were the NPRM limited to consideration of service based on the maintenance of the interference rules now set forth in our regulations, I could thus have supported its issuance. But the NPRM is not so limited.