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**Before the
Federal Communications Commission**

**Public Hearing on Broadcast Localism
Rapid City, South Dakota**

**Statement of
Mark Antonitis
President and General Manager KELO-TV**

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Office of the Secretary

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Good evening. My name is Mark Antonitis. I'm the General Manager of KELO-TV -- known to most of our viewers throughout South Dakota as "KELOLAND" or "KELOLAND-TV." Our station provides local broadcast television service to virtually all of South Dakota through our station in Sioux Falls and our satellite stations KDLO-TV in Florence, KPLO-TV in Reliance, and KCLO-TV in Rapid City. We also provide television service to portions of Minnesota, Iowa and Nebraska.

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Localism was "born" seventy years ago when Congress chose to create a local -- rather than a national -- broadcast system. The defining feature of our decentralized broadcasting system is the duty of local broadcast stations to tailor their programming to serve the unique needs and interests of the particular local communities they serve. That duty is called localism.

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You could not have picked a better place to talk about localism than South Dakota. Our state -- and our way of life -- is thousands of miles from the media metropolises of New York and Los Angeles. Flip through any local TV guide here in South Dakota -- or simply flip on KELO-TV -- itself and you're likely to see programs that may seem foreign to those who don't live in our state. For example, we air a weekly program called "Today's Ag" that is produced by South Dakota State University and addresses critical issues confronting our farmers and our agricultural economy. "First Monday" is a local public affairs program that tracks the current political issues and elections affecting South Dakotans. This program provides an opportunity for political candidates to make their views known to the public. Our "HealthBeat" specials offer critical information and tips on health issues affecting local families -- the dangers of flu season, the Monkey Pox scare, and the rise in reported cases of West Nile Virus. KELO also broadcasts South Dakota high school sports tournaments every year. Our "Sunday TV Mass" provides statewide coverage of religious services to many South Dakota residents who are otherwise unable to attend. We are proud of all of these locally-originated programs -- not only for their distinctively local flavor, but because of the impact they have on the everyday lives of our viewers.

And then there's the weather. Finance and fashion may be serious business in New York. Football may be serious business in Green Bay, Wisconsin. But weather is serious business in South Dakota. So serious, in fact, that KELOLAND has invested millions of dollars in three live Doppler radar systems that enable us to give our viewers live, up-to-the-minute information on the location of storms both over-the-air and on-line. KELOLAND is the only television station in the nation that owns and operates three 250

thousand watt live Doppler radars. We also have weather sensors that report real-time weather conditions from 35 middle schools across South Dakota, southwest Minnesota, and northwest Iowa. Why do we do this? We do it because South Dakota is in "Tornado Alley."

Our weather warning systems have proved to be truly live-saving technologies. Six years ago a massive tornado devastated the small, rural town of Spencer, South Dakota. Spencer is located just over 40 miles west of Sioux Falls. Six people were killed. 150 people were injured. And 90% of the town was destroyed. Our live Doppler radar helped us to warn Spencer viewers of the exact location of the storm 20 minutes before impact. Without KELOLAND's warnings, more people would have perished. After the storm subsided, KELO-TV organized a relief effort that produced 8000 volunteers. We also preempted our prime time network programming to air a three and a half hour telethon that raised \$750,000 to help rebuild the town. The telethon took a personal turn as residents of Spencer told their stories in live interviews and the station broadcast video footage of the damage caused to local homes and farms. The success of our relief assistance effort reverberated even outside South Dakota, as the National Association of Broadcasters awarded KELO-TV the 1999 "Friend in Need Award."

KELO-TV also was on the front lines of "Tornado Tuesday" last summer -- a day in which South Dakota suffered 67 tornados in a 7-hour period. We were on the air with emergency information before the first tornado warning was issued, and we stayed on the air continuously through to the final storm of the evening. Again, our company's investment in expensive weather radar equipment paid off. Our three live Doppler radars and state-of-the-art weather technology allowed KELO-TV meteorologists to pinpoint for

our viewers the precise locations of the tornados, the directions they were headed, and the times they would hit. Two of our station's meteorologists put their lives at risk chasing the strongest tornado of the day, and, in the end, gave our viewers an eyewitness report on the destruction of the town of Manchester as it happened. At the end of the day "Tornado Tuesday" tied the national record -- for most tornados in one state in one day. But, we at KELOLAND are most proud of another record not a single South Dakotan died that day. KELO-TV played a role in doing its job to keep citizens informed and safe.

For some seven years now, KELO-TV has gone the extra mile to extend the concept of localism to our public service outreach efforts. Instead of simply broadcasting national public service messages, our station created a station-wide local outreach program called "Tradition of Caring." Each employee at the station is assigned to a team that is responsible for identifying the needs of a local charitable organization, producing a 30-second PSA for the organization, and volunteering 8 hours of their own time to assist the organization. In 1999, the National Association of Television Arts and Sciences recognized this unique and personal approach to local public service as the top public service campaign in the nation that year. KELO-TV was proud to receive a national Emmy Award for Tradition of Caring in 2000. Presently, Tradition of Caring serves some 15 different non-profit organizations and causes, including Children's Care Hospital and School, YMCA youth programs, foster parenting and adoption.

It's easy for me, of course, to stand here as the General Manager of KELO-TV and brag about our station's commitment to serving the needs and interests of our local viewers. After all, I see it every day. But, I think the more compelling voices come from

those whose lives have been altered, improved, or even saved, by our dedication to serving our local communities. Attached are a long list of letters from viewers that chronicle and detail the service we have provided to our local communities and the warm and heartfelt “thank yous” we have received from viewers, local businesses, and charitable organizations over the past few years. It makes for a wonderful story and shows, more than anything else, why I believe KELOLAND represents broadcast localism at its finest.

Thank you for your attention.

***KELO-TV is the only television station in the country that owns and operates three 250 thousand watt live Doppler weather radars. Radar images are freely distributed over the internet, and shared in real-time with civil authorities in Pierre.**

***The station has purchased and installed weather sensors that report current weather conditions from 35 middle schools across South Dakota, southwest Minnesota, and northwest Iowa. Station meteorologists have developed a weather curriculum involving the weather information for use in middle school classes.**

***Each year, station meteorologists visit more than one hundred schools and other community organizations to talk about weather and severe weather safety. Often those visits include a tour of “Dorothy”, the storm chasing vehicle used by station meteorologists to make live field reports from developing severe weather situations.**

***The station spearheaded a public safety program to make weather radios available at an affordable price to viewers.**

***Station meteorologists have given spotter talks about severe weather recognition at a local theater and county fair. Hundreds of people participated.**



