



**Hearing on
“Exploring the Value of Spectrum in the U.S.
Economy”**

**United States Senate
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation**

***Subcommittee on Communications, Technology,
Innovation, and the Internet***

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**Statement of Pat LaPlatney,
Raycom Media**

**On behalf of the
National Association of Broadcasters**

Good morning, Chairman Wicker, Ranking Member Schatz and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for inviting me to testify today on behalf of the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB). My name is Pat LaPlatney, and I am the president and chief executive officer of Raycom Media, where I oversee 60 broadcast television stations stretching from Hattiesburg to Honolulu, as well as a number of production and digital media properties.

I am testifying today on behalf of the National Association of Broadcasters, where I serve as a member of the Television Board of Directors and represent more than 1,300 full-power local television stations. This includes stations owned by major networks like ABC, CBS, Univision, Fox and NBC; separately-owned network affiliate stations and independent broadcasters. Each of these stations serves its community with free over-the-air television that combines locally-focused content, including highly valued local news, with the most-watched entertainment programming in the media landscape.

I appreciate you inviting me here today to speak about the upcoming, voluntary upgrade that broadcasters across the country, and throughout the world, for that matter, are planning to make to the Next Generation Television standard, ATSC 3.0. Next Gen TV will drastically improve and expand the experience of the large and growing population of over-the-air broadcast television viewers – and in a more spectrally efficient manner that requires no additional government funds. Next Gen TV is based on an Internet Protocol backbone, which supports a seamless blending of internet and TV content. The result is a higher quality interactive viewing experience that combines the best of broadcast and broadband and that will enable innovative broadcasters to bring

new services to viewers. In today's increasingly fragmented video space, Next Gen TV will improve the quality and features of the country's most-watched programming, allowing viewers the potential to consume it wherever and however they choose and permitting broadcasters to compete more effectively against other digital video providers.

In a world where preteens have smartphones, broadband access is an expectation on par with electricity and water, and social media enable a wide range of viewpoints to spread around the globe instantly, locally-oriented broadcasting and local news coverage from trusted sources are more important than ever. Through Next Gen TV, broadcasters are able to deliver to our viewers – your constituents -- sharp ultra HD images, in addition to interactive features, customizable content and multichannel immersive sound. Viewers can also look forward to more choices, more channels and more flexibility. Mobile devices and TV sets equipped with Next Gen receivers will make over-the-air TV available virtually anywhere. And it will provide even more effective alerting to the public in times of crisis.

One need only look at the impact broadcasters have in their communities today to recognize the potential public safety benefits Next Gen TV affords local viewers. Earlier this year, near Hattiesburg, Mississippi, a tornado touched down shortly before dawn, leaving a 25-mile wake of destruction and four casualties. Local broadcasters gave residents advanced warning of where to go, or not go, and provided a communications lifeline to emergency services. Or look at Hawaii News Now, which embedded news crews for an extended period of time in the Puna District on the Big Island while back-to-back hurricanes battered houses only to be followed by a

threatening lava flow. Next Gen TV would have enabled more and better emergency services, including enhanced alerting, interactive menus with hyper-local detail and the potential for mobile access even when cellular signals fail. Moreover, Next Gen capabilities would enhance the recovery efforts of local broadcasters, such as our local NBC affiliate WDAM-TV in Hattiesburg, to publicize specific resources available to particular storm victims, instruct viewers on safe havens and conduct fundraising drives.

Broadcasters live in the communities we serve. And regardless of where they reside, our broadcasters are committed to ensuring that local residents in communities across the country have the same opportunities as people in large cities to benefit from advances in technology. Next Gen TV is critical to affording these opportunities.

Next Gen TV represents a unique partnership between the technology industry (CTA), first responders (AWARN) and commercial (NAB) and public (APTS) broadcasters. We petitioned the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to allow stations to conduct a voluntary, market-driven transition to this new standard, specifically outlining the many ways viewers will benefit from this standard while also ensuring no viewer disruption during the transition. To that end, any broadcast upgrade to Next Gen TV will be facilitated by channel-sharing arrangements that allow broadcasts to continue in the current standard as well. In response to our petition, the FCC released on February 24 a rulemaking notice proposing to authorize TV broadcasters to use the Next Gen standard.

Some of my fellow panelists will outline the advancements they hope to accomplish either on their current spectrum or in newly designated spectrum bands over the years and decades to come. One thing they will *not* say, however, is that they

are asking the FCC for permission to make investments to enable these innovations. In fact, broadcasters are the *only* licensees required to ask the FCC for permission to innovate. It's like having to ask the governor for permission to plant a garden in your own yard.

Broadcasters are willing and ready to make the necessary investments in our infrastructure to provide what we believe will be truly groundbreaking improvements to free, over-the-air television for the benefit of viewers across the country. The new standard will allow us to transmit in Ultra High Definition with High Dynamic Range (HDR) and enhance viewer experiences through interactivity, as well as provide enhanced emergency and weather alerts to TVs, phones and tablets. Most importantly, the Next Gen TV standard is flexible enough to allow us to continue innovating within this new standard to adapt to the next – and as yet unknown -- ways consumers will want to consume broadcast content in the future.

Before I conclude, I do want to highlight one issue currently before Congress that poses challenges to viewers' ability to enjoy the benefits of Next Gen TV – the successful completion of the broadcast incentive auction. As the broadcast incentive auction winds its way to completion, one thing is certain: We will end up with less spectrum for broadcasting and fewer stations. In light of this, we will need to make the most of the broadcast spectrum that remains, and provide the most compelling services we can, to be competitive and continue serving our communities. Next Generation TV provides a vehicle for broadcasters to do just that.

To that end, I want to thank Senators Moran and Schatz, as well as your cosponsors, including Senators Blumenthal, Fisher and Blunt, for your work on draft

legislation that ensures broadcasters have adequate time and resources to successfully repack following the close of the incentive auction. Legislation that ensures no television or radio broadcaster will pay out of pocket to cover repack costs and that no broadcaster will be forced off the air due to circumstances beyond their control, provides the certainty that an investment in Next Gen TV requires.

Thank you again for inviting me here today. I look forward to answering any questions.