



Federal Communications Commission
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Re: Application for Renewal of License
Station WFOR-TV, Miami, Florida
File No. BRCT-20041001AJQ
Facility ID No. 47902

Gentlemen:

On December 9, 2004, the United Church of Christ ("UCC") filed a Petition to Deny the above-referenced license renewal application of CBS Television Stations, Inc. ("CBS"), licensee of Station WFOR-TV, Miami, Florida.¹ CBS filed an Opposition to the Petition to Deny on January 10, 2005, to which UCC responded on February 7, 2005. For the reasons set forth below, we deny the Petition.

Section 309(k)(1) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (the "Act"), states that the Commission shall grant a license renewal application if it finds, "*with respect to that station,*" that (a) the station has served the public interest, convenience, and necessity; (b) there have been no serious violations by the licensee of the Communications Act or Commission rules and regulations; and (c) there have been no other violations by the licensee of the Act or Commission rules or regulations which, taken together, would constitute a pattern of abuse.² The Commission analyzes any public interest allegation according to a two-step process. The petition must first contain specific allegations of fact sufficient to show that such a grant would

¹ Members of UCC also submitted letters in support of the UCC Petition.

² 47 U.S.C. §309(k)(1) (emphasis added).

be *prima facie* inconsistent with the public interest.³ If so, the Commission will designate the application for hearing if the allegations, together with any opposing evidence before the Commission, raise a substantial and material question of fact as to whether grant would serve the public interest, or if the Commission is otherwise unable to conclude that granting the application would serve the public interest.⁴

UCC requests that the Commission deny the license renewal of station WFOR-TV based on the decision by the CBS Television Network not to air one of its advertisements.⁵ UCC argues that “under the facts here, WFOR improperly failed to recognize that UCC had a limited right of access for the purchase of time.”⁶ CBS states that the spot violates the CBS Television Network’s established policy not to accept editorial advertisements.⁷

We conclude that refusal of the editorial advertisement at issue is not *prima facie* inconsistent with the public interest. Under the plain terms of section 309(k), the Commission cannot deny a license renewal application based on violations that occurred at other stations licensed to the same licensee because the relevant findings must be made “with respect to that station.”⁸ Here, UCC does not allege that it ever offered the spot at issue to station WFOR-TV. According to CBS, it is the policy of the Viacom Television Stations Group “to leave decisions as to whether to accept particular editorial advertisements to the individual discretion of each station.”⁹ Station WFOR-TV may have chosen to air the spot had it been offered the opportunity. In any event, “Congress...has expressly limited the scope of the license renewal inquiry to matters occurring at the particular station for which license renewal is sought.”¹⁰ Because UCC’s allegations do not pertain to station WFOR-TV, we conclude that UCC’s petition is insufficient to make out a *prima facie* case.

³ 47 U.S.C. §309(d)(1); *Astroline Communications Co. Ltd. Partnership v. FCC*, 857 F.2d 1556 (D.C. Cir. 1988) (“*Astroline*”).

⁴ *Astroline*, 857 F.2d at 1561; 47 U.S.C. §309(e).

⁵ The advertisement at issue is entitled “Night Club,” and is intended, according to UCC, to help “equip local church leaders to welcome newcomers to worship,” and to “move the national culture from one of division to one of inclusion.” Petition to Deny, at 2-3. The spot depicts would-be worshippers approaching a church guarded by bouncers who refuse entrance to what appears to be a gay couple, a Hispanic young man, a man in a wheelchair, and an African-American woman, followed by the tag “Jesus didn’t turn people away...Neither do we.” The spot then concludes with the statement: “No matter who you are or where you are on life’s journey, you’re welcome here.”

⁶ *Id.* at 4.

⁷ Opposition to Petition to Deny, at 3.

⁸ 47 U.S.C. §309(k)(1).

⁹ Opposition to Petition to Deny, at 3.

¹⁰ *Sagittarius Broadcasting Corp.*, 18 FCC Red 22551, 22555 (2003), citing 47 U.S.C. § 309(k)(1).

Accordingly, the Petition to Deny filed by United Church of Christ **IS DENIED**.

Sincerely,

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