



IN THIS ISSUE:

**FCC SLOWLY RETURNS TO FULL
OPERATION AFTER SHUTDOWN1**

**FCC SETS COMMENT DEADLINES
FOR NEXT GEN TV FURTHER NOTICE
OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING.....2**

**TV AFFILIATION AGREEMENT
SCRUTINY AND NEWS DISTORTION
HEADLINE LATEST PUBLIC
INTEREST BATTLEGROUND2**

**FCC ISSUES PUBLIC DRAFT OF
LPTV ORDER SCHEDULED FOR
ADOPTION DECEMBER 18TH.....2**

**FCC RESETS CLASS A / LPTV / TV
TRANSLATOR FILING SCHEDULE3**

DATES TO REMEMBER..... 3-4

FCC SLOWLY RETURNS TO FULL OPERATION AFTER SHUTDOWN

One post-government shutdown fact is clear -- the FCC does not rebound from government shutdowns very well. From personnel to filing systems, it has been a slow process with multiple hiccups along the way.

On the personnel side, it took the FCC a few days to have everyone back at work. Emails that we sent on the first day after the shutdown included some automatic responses of when staffers would later return. And of course, once a full complement of personnel were back at their desks, the build-up of items during the shutdown, along with required actions on applications pending before the shutdown began, meant that many staffers were initially overloaded. But slowly, we received responses. Our kudos to the FCC employees for their loyalty and dedication to the industries they serve.

As for FCC systems, the FCC delayed bringing some of them back online and then staggered deadlines to avoid system overload from too many filers accessing systems at once. But keeping track of the extended deadlines was like going through a regulatory maze at times. Earlier guidance when the shutdown began was that deadlines during the shutdown were extended to the first business day after normal FCC operations resumed. That guidance was set aside by an initial November 13 [public notice](#) extending all deadlines that fell between October 1 – November 17 to Tuesday, November 18th. But a later [public notice](#) extended 3rd quarter issues/programs list OPIF upload deadlines to December 1, and any EEO public file reports due October 1 to November 24 (EEO audit responses were also extended to November 24).

A related [public notice](#) provided additional guidance on processing priorities for applications filed between November 18-25 and permits that expired between October 1 – November 18. In addition, that notice announced that any STA that expired between October 1-December 4 was automatically extended to December 5.

Finally, for stations that had political time requests between October 1-November 12 that could not be uploaded because of OPIF being down, a new [public notice](#) issued November 17 directed stations in various states to make OPIF political file uploads in defined upload windows. The Media Bureau also [set new deadlines](#) for the Class A/LPTV modification and LPTV new station filings that were originally announced in early September. For a full review of deadlines and extensions, please see our “Dates to Remember” section at the end of this newsletter.

Certain filing systems, especially the antenna structure registration system, have continued to have issues with long interruptions to their availability. The FCC has stated that the staff will be flexible in working with stations as FCC systems are returned to operational status.

FCC SETS COMMENT DEADLINES FOR NEXT GEN TV FURTHER NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING

The FCC’s Media Bureau has set January 20, 2026 as the deadline for comments to its further proposed [rulemaking](#) related to use of the ATSC 3.0 “Next Gen” transmission standard for broadcast television. Reply comments will be due February 18, 2026. The FNPRM seeks volumes of information about technical issues, elimination of ATSC 1.0 simulcast requirements, application processing, coverage requirements, mandatory carriage implications, signal strength measurement levels and techniques, and the wisdom of allowing widespread elimination of ATSC 1.0 signals before consumer devices are capable of receiving 3.0 signals.

TV AFFILIATION AGREEMENT SCRUTINY AND NEWS DISTORTION HEADLINE LATEST PUBLIC INTEREST BATTLEGROUND

The Media Bureau issued a [Public Notice](#) November 19th seeking comment on TV station public interest obligations in the context of television network affiliation agreements. The notice seeks comment on the current broadcast television market, regulatory and contractual dynamics governing the relationship between local

TV stations and national TV programmers and in particular on whether national programming networks are exerting undue influence or control over affiliate stations that hinder or create an imbalance with a station’s obligation to act in the public interest. Comments are due quickly -- on December 10 -- with reply comments by December 24.

In addition, after receiving a letter from some members of Congress urging the repeal of the FCC’s news distortion rule, FCC Chairman Brendan Carr pushed back, responding in part by issuing a [letter](#) to the BBC, PBS and NPR regarding splicing of video content from a 2021 Trump speech. Carr’s letter states “as you may know, broadcasters regulated by the FCC have a legal obligation to operate in the public interest. Those public interest requirements include prohibitions on news distortion and broadcast hoaxes. After all, the FCC has stated that “rigging or slanting the news is a most heinous act against the public interest.” I am committed to holding broadcasters accountable to their public interest obligations, and your prompt response will help aid me in that effort.”

FCC ISSUES PUBLIC DRAFT OF LPTV ORDER SCHEDULED FOR ADOPTION DECEMBER 18TH

The FCC Commissioners meet on December 18, 2025 and have published an agenda that includes consideration of a Report and Order in a proceeding begun by the prior administration that contemplated new regulations for LPTV stations. A [draft](#) of the Order has been published and several items are particularly relevant in the context of new filing opportunities that are ongoing (see next article).

The draft Order updates how relocation distances are calculated for displaced and channel sharing LPTV/TV translator stations, and establishes both a uniform maximum relocation distance for all minor modification applications and a formal method for LPTV Service stations to specify a community of license. The draft also includes language requiring LPTV stations to use a call sign that matches their service designation, though existing LPTV/Class A call signs are “grandfathered.” In addition, it

establishes a formal process for LPTV stations to change their service designation, clarifies what EAS equipment must be installed by LPTV stations and the video program responsibilities of LPTV/TV translators. Finally, the draft Order declines to adopt new LPTV minimum operating hours, limit community of license changes, restrict service designation changes, or limit applicants' ability to round distance calculations.

If adopted, the Order's provisions would have different "effective dates" because some will need to get approval for new information gathering and application forms.

Although a separate proceeding proposing the imposition of political file obligations on LPTV stations was part of the same docket, the draft Order makes clear that it makes no decision regarding the proposals in that proceeding.

FCC RESETS CLASS A / LPTV / TV TRANSLATOR FILING SCHEDULE

In a November 17th [Public Notice](#), the FCC reset its previously announced schedule of dates for Class A, LPTV and TV translator major change applications and for new LPTV and TV translator station applications. A freeze on major change applications remains in effect until it is lifted on December 18. A temporary freeze on minor change applications (including displacement applications) will go into effect December 11. Applications filed during these scheduled windows will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis.

We have learned from the FCC staff that the application form for new LPTV and TV translator stations will not become available in LMS until approximately a week or so before the March 19, 2026 start date for such applications.

Details on the entire schedule and deadlines are included in the Dates to Remember section of this newsletter.

DATES TO REMEMBER

December 1, 2025

Deadline for Full Power TV, Class A, and LPTV Stations to file FCC Form 2100, Schedule G, and pay 5% of gross revenues from any ancillary or supplementary services provided between October 1, 2024 and September 30, 2025. NCE TV stations pay on 2.5% of gross revenue. Ancillary and supplemental services do not include free over the air video content, but do include computer software distribution, data transmissions, teletext, interactive materials, aural messages, paging services, or audio signals, and subscription video. Stations that provided no such services do not have to file a report.

December 1, 2025 (extended from October 10, 2025)

TV, Class A, AM & FM Stations (commercial & noncommercial): deadline to complete and upload to online public file the 3rd Quarter 2025 issues/program lists and any foreign sponsorship identification reports

Class A TV Stations Only: deadline to complete and post to your online public file the 3rd Quarter 2025 certification of ongoing Class A eligibility

Noncommercial Broadcast Stations: deadline to complete and post to your online public file the 3rd Quarter 2025 report for any 3rd Party Fundraising conducted during the quarter

December 1-8, 2025

Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia and District of Columbia Stations with political file upload obligations due during government shutdown upload all documents to your public file during the window specified

December 8, 2025

Effective Date for revised Foreign Sponsorship ID rule allowing the use of certification forms

December 9-16, 2025

California Stations with political file upload obligations due during government shutdown upload all documents to your public file during the window specified

December 11, 2025

Class A, LPTV, TV Translator filing freeze for all minor change applications (including displacement applications) begins 6p ET

December 17-24, 2025

All stations in states OTHER THAN NY, NJ, CT, VA, MD, WV, DC and CA with political file upload obligations due during government shutdown upload all documents to your public file during the window specified

December 18, 2025

Class A, LPTV, TV Translator filing freeze on all minor changes applications (including displacement applications) is lifted and expanded opportunity to file major change applications with relocations limited to no more than 121 kilometers begins 12:01 am ET

January 10, 2026

TV, Class A, AM & FM Stations (commercial & noncommercial): deadline to complete and upload to online public file the 4th Quarter 2025 issues/program lists and any foreign sponsorship identification reports

Class A TV Stations Only: deadline to complete and post to your online public file the 4th Quarter 2025 certification of ongoing Class A eligibility

Noncommercial Broadcast Stations: deadline to complete and post to your online public file the 4th Quarter 2025 report for any 3rd Party Fundraising conducted during the quarter

January 29, 2026

Class A, LPTV, TV Translator major change application filing freeze begins 6p ET

January 30, 2026

All Commercial Full Power and Class A Television Stations – deadline to complete and submit the 2024 children's television report in LMS **and** separately upload children's television commercial limits certifications for all of 2025 in the station online public file

January 31, 2026

Web Streaming Stations: deadline to remit annual license fee and related statement of account with SoundExchange for the statutory license allowing

streaming of sound recordings on the web. Payment can be made on SoundExchange's online filing portal "Licensee Direct"

March 12, 2026

Class A, LPTV, TV Translator minor change applications filing freeze begins 6p ET

March 19, 2026

Class A, LPTV, TV Translator major change applications resumes, minor change freeze is lifted, and acceptance of applications for **new LPTV and TV translator** stations begins 12:01 am ET

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Actual resolution of legal issues depends upon many factors, including variations of facts and applicable Federal laws. This publication is not intended to provide legal advice on specific subjects, rather, it seeks to provide insight into legal developments and issues that we feel could be useful to our clients and friends.

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