

Stations Beware: FCC Shortens License Renewal Period for Repeated Public File Violations

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Entering into a consent decree with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) can provide an opportunity for a broadcast station to start a new license term with a clean slate. But a recent Order on Reconsideration (Order) from the Audio Division of the FCC's Media Bureau demonstrates the importance of expeditiously cleaning up the underlying issues.

In the May 1, 2026 Order, the Audio Division modified the adopting order for a consent decree with SPB LLC (Licensee), licensee of station WABG(AM), Greenwood, Mississippi (Station). The consent decree terminated the Bureau's investigation into potential violations by the Station of the FCC's online public inspection file (OPIF) rules and cleared the way for the FCC to grant the Station's pending license renewal application.

The Order alleges that less than 10 days after the consent decree was signed, the Licensee failed to upload the Station's quarterly issues and programs report. Because this was a new violation after the date of the consent decree, it was not subject to the terms of the consent decree. Accordingly, instead of renewing the Station's license for the full renewal term, the Audio Division granted a short-term renewal for just one year. According to the Order, "[t]his limited renewal period will afford the Commission an opportunity to review the Station's compliance with the Act and the FCC's rules and to take whatever corrective actions, if any, that may be warranted at that time."

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These events serve as a cautionary tale to licensees entering into consent decrees to clear a hold on their renewal applications: Make sure to have a compliance plan in place before signing the consent decree. The FCC does not take kindly to repeated violations after a consent decree is issued.

Wiley's Media Practice has a deep bench of attorneys with extensive experience counseling broadcasters and advocating for their interests before the Commission. If you have any questions, please contact one of the attorneys listed on this alert or the Wiley attorney who routinely handles your FCC matters.