

**Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In re Application of)	
)	
Ace Broadcasting, Inc.)	Facility I.D. No. 1652
)	NAL/Acct. No. MB-200741410336
For Renewal of License for)	FRN: 0009643206
Station WQST(AM))	File No. BR-20050415AAA
Forest, Mississippi)	

**MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER
AND
NOTICE OF APPARENT LIABILITY FOR FORFEITURE**

Adopted: May 16, 2007

Released: May 18, 2007

By the Associate Chief, Media Bureau:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Commission has before it the captioned application of Ace Broadcasting, Inc. (the "Licensee"), for renewal of its license for Station WQST(AM), Thomasville, Georgia (the "Station"). In this *Memorandum Opinion and Order and Notice of Apparent Liability for Forfeiture* ("NAL") issued pursuant to Sections 309(k) and 503(b) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (the "Act"), and Section 1.80 of the Commission's Rules (the "Rules"),¹ by the Associate Chief, Media Bureau by authority delegated under Section 0.283 of the Rules,² we find that the Licensee apparently willfully violated Section 73.3539 of the Rules,³ by failing to timely file a license renewal application for the Station. Based upon our review of the facts and circumstances before us, we conclude that the Licensee is apparently liable for a monetary forfeiture in the amount of three thousand dollars (\$3,000), and we grant the captioned WQST(AM) renewal application.

II. BACKGROUND

2. Section 73.3539(a) of the Rules requires that applications for renewal of license for broadcast stations must be filed "not later than the first day of the fourth full calendar month prior to the expiration date of the license sought to be renewed."⁴ An application for renewal of WQST(AM)'s license should have been filed by February 1, 2004, four months prior to the Station's June 1, 2004, license expiration date,⁵ but was not. In fact, the Licensee did not file the Station's renewal application until April 15, 2005, more than ten months after the Station's license expiration. The Licensee has made no request for Special Temporary Authority ("STA") to continue Station operations, nor has it offered any explanation for the failure to timely file the WQST(AM) license renewal application.

¹ 47 U.S.C. §§ 309(k), 503(b); 47 C.F.R. § 1.80.

² See 47 C.F.R. § 0.283.

³ See 47 C.F.R. § 73.3539.

⁴ 47 C.F.R. § 73.3539(a).

⁵ See 47 C.F.R. §§ 73.1020, 73.3539(a).

III. DISCUSSION

3. *Proposed Forfeiture.* In this case, the Licensee failed to timely file a license renewal application for WQST(AM) as required by Section 73.3539(a) of the Rules. Moreover, it does not dispute that it continued Station operation for more than ten months after its license had expired on June 1, 2004, before filing the renewal application, never seeking STA to so operate, in violation of Section 301 of the Act. The Licensee was obligated to fully comply with the Rules, including timely filing the Station's renewal application and maintaining in effect the Station authorization.⁶ It did not do so.

4. This *NAL* is issued pursuant to Section 503(b)(1)(B) of the Act. Under that provision, any person who is determined by the Commission to have willfully or repeatedly failed to comply with any provision of the Act or any rule, regulation, or order issued by the Commission shall be liable to the United States for a forfeiture penalty.⁷ Section 312(f)(1) of the Act defines willful as "the conscious and deliberate commission or omission of [any] act, irrespective of any intent to violate" the law.⁸ The legislative history to Section 312(f)(1) of the Act clarifies that this definition of willful applies to both Sections 312 and 503(b) of the Act,⁹ and the Commission has so interpreted the term in the Section 503(b) context.¹⁰ Section 312(f)(2) of the Act provides that "[t]he term 'repeated,' when used with reference to the commission or omission of any act, means the commission or omission of such act more than once or, if such commission or omission is continuous, for more than one day."¹¹

5. The Commission's *Forfeiture Policy Statement* and Section 1.80(b)(4) of the Rules establish a base forfeiture amount of \$3,000 for the failure to file a required form.¹² The guidelines also specify a base forfeiture amount of \$10,000 for station construction and/or operation without an instrument of authorization for the service.¹³ In determining the appropriate forfeiture amount, we may adjust the base amount upward or downward by considering factors enumerated in Section 503(b)(2)(D) of the Act, including "the nature, circumstances, extent and gravity of the violation, and, with respect to the violator, the degree of culpability, any history of prior offenses, ability to pay, and such other matters as justice may require."¹⁴

6. In this case, the Licensee failed to timely file the WQST(AM) renewal application and continued Station operations for more than ten months after the Station's license had expired on June 1, 2004, before filing the appropriate renewal application, never seeking STA to so operate. Because the Commission's Enforcement Bureau already has issued a *Forfeiture Order* to the Licensee in an amount of

⁶ See, e.g., *Hemmingford Media, Inc.*, Forfeiture Order, 14 FCC Rcd 2940, 2941-2 (CIB 1999) (responsibility for complying with terms of station license "rests solely and exclusively with the licensee") (citing *Empire Broadcasting Corp.*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 25 FCC 2d 68 (1970).

⁷ 47 U.S.C. § 503(b)(1)(B). See also 47 C.F.R. 1.80(a)(1).

⁸ 47 U.S.C. § 312(f)(1).

⁹ See H.R. Rep. No. 97-765, 97th Cong. 2d Sess. 51 (1982).

¹⁰ See *Southern California Broadcasting Co.*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 6 FCC Rcd 4387, 4388 (1991).

¹¹ 47 U.S.C. § 312(f)(2).

¹² See *Forfeiture Policy Statement and Amendment of Section 1.80(b) of the Rules to Incorporate the Forfeiture Guidelines*, Report and Order, 12 FCC Rcd 17087, 17113-15 (1997) ("*Forfeiture Policy Statement*"), recon. denied, 15 FCC Rcd 303 (1999); 47 C.F.R. § 1.80(b)(4), note to paragraph (b)(4), Section I.

¹³ A broadcast station requires an authorization from the Commission to operate. See 47 U.S.C. § 301.

¹⁴ 47 U.S.C. § 503(b)(2)(D); see also *Forfeiture Policy Statement*, 12 FCC Rcd at 17100; 47 C.F.R. § 1.80(b)(4).

\$4,000 for its violation of Section 301 of the Act due to its unauthorized operation of the Station,¹⁵ we will concern ourselves only with the late-filed renewal application. Taking into consideration these facts and all of the factors required by Section 503(b)(2)(D) of the Act and the *Forfeiture Policy Statement*, we propose only a forfeiture for the full \$3,000 amount for the failure to timely file the WQST(AM) license renewal application.

7. *License Renewal Application.* In evaluating an application for license renewal, the Commission's decision is governed by Section 309(k) of the Act.¹⁶ That section provides that if, upon consideration of the application and pleadings, we find that (1) the station has served the public interest, convenience, and necessity; (2) there have been no serious violations of the Act or the Rules; and (3) there have been no other violations which, taken together, constitute a pattern of abuse, we are to grant the renewal application.¹⁷ If, however, the licensee fails to meet that standard, the Commission may deny the application – after notice and opportunity for a hearing under Section 309(e) of the Act – or grant the application “on terms and conditions that are appropriate, including a renewal for a term less than the maximum otherwise permitted.”¹⁸

8. We find that the Licensee's violations of Section 73.3539 of the Rules and Section 301 of the Act (the latter noted in the Enforcement Bureau's *Forfeiture Order*) do not constitute “serious violations” warranting designation for evidentiary hearing. Moreover, we find no evidence of violations that, when considered together, evidence a pattern of abuse.¹⁹ Further, we find that Station WQST(AM) served the public interest, convenience, and necessity during the subject license term. We will therefore grant the license renewal application below.

IV. ORDERING CLAUSES

9. Accordingly, IT IS ORDERED, pursuant to Section 503(b) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, and Section 1.80 of the Commission's Rules, that Ace Broadcasting, Inc. is hereby NOTIFIED of its APPARENT LIABILITY FOR FORFEITURE in the amount of three thousand dollars (\$3,000) for apparent willful violation of Section 73.3539 of the Commission's Rules.

10. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, pursuant to Section 1.80 of the Commission's Rules, that, within thirty (30) days of the release date of this *NAL*, Ace Broadcasting, Inc. SHALL PAY the full amount of the proposed forfeiture or SHALL FILE a written statement seeking reduction or cancellation of the proposed forfeiture.

¹⁵ *Ace Broadcasting, Inc.*, Forfeiture Order, DA 07-1301, 2007 WL 786316 (EB Mar. 16, 2007).

¹⁶ 47 U.S.C. § 309(k).

¹⁷ 47 U.S.C. § 309(k)(1). The renewal standard was amended to read as described by Section 204(a) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996, Pub. L. No. 104-104, 110 Stat. 56 (1996). See *Implementation of Sections 204(a) and 204(c) of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 (Broadcast License Renewal Procedures)*, Order, 11 FCC Rcd 6363 (1996).

¹⁸ 47 U.S.C. §§ 309(k)(2), 309(k)(3).

¹⁹ For example, we do not find here that the Licensee's Station operation "was conducted in an exceedingly careless, inept and negligent manner and that the Licensee is either incapable of correcting or unwilling to correct the operating deficiencies." See *Heart of the Black Hills Stations*, Memorandum Opinion and Order, 32 FCC 2d 196, 198 (1971). Nor do we find on the record here that "the number, nature and extent" of the violations indicate that "the licensee cannot be relied upon to operate [the station] in the future in accordance with the requirements of its licenses and the Commission's Rules." *Heart of the Black Hills Stations*, 32 FCC 2d at 200. See also *Center for Study and Application of Black Economic Development*, Hearing Designation Order, 6 FCC Rcd 4622 (1991), *Calvary Educational Broadcasting Network, Inc.*, Hearing Designation Order, 7 FCC Rcd 4037 (1992).

11. Payment of the proposed forfeiture must be made by check or similar instrument, payable to the order of the Federal Communications Commission. The payment must include the NAL/Acct. No. and FRN No. referenced above. Payment by check or money order may be mailed to Federal Communications Commission, at P.O. Box 358340, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15251-8340. Payment by overnight mail may be sent to Mellon Bank/LB 358340, 500 Ross Street, Room 1540670, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania 15251. Payment by wire transfer may be made to ABA Number 043000261, receiving bank Mellon Bank, and account number 911-6106.

12. The response, if any, must be mailed to Office of the Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 445 12th Street, S.W., Washington D.C. 20554, ATTN: Peter H. Doyle, Chief, Audio Division, Media Bureau, and MUST INCLUDE the NAL/Acct. No. referenced above.

13. The Commission will not consider reducing or canceling a forfeiture in response to a claim of inability to pay unless the respondent submits: (1) federal tax returns for the most recent three-year period; (2) financial statements prepared according to generally accepted accounting practices (“GAAP”); or (3) some other reliable and objective documentation that accurately reflects the respondent’s current financial status. Any claim of inability to pay must specifically identify the basis for the claim by reference to the financial documentation submitted.

14. Requests for full payment of the forfeiture proposed in this *NAL* under the installment plan should be sent to: Associate Managing Director-Financial Operations, 445 12th Street, S.W., Room 1-A625, Washington, D.C. 20554.²⁰

15. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED, pursuant to Section 309(k) of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, that the license renewal application of Ace Broadcasting, Inc. for Station WQST(AM), Forest, Mississippi (File No. BR-20050415AAA) IS GRANTED.

16. IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that copies of this *NAL* shall be sent, by First Class and Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested, to Ace Broadcasting, Inc., 36 Second Street, Morton, Mississippi 39117, and to its counsel, James R. Cooke, Esquire, 2821 Beechwood Circle, Arlington, Virginia 22207.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

William D. Freedman
Associate Chief, Media Bureau

²⁰ See 47 C.F.R. § 1.1914.