

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL O'RIELLY**

Re: Vearyl Pennington, Morehead, Kentucky and Michael Williamson, Morehead, Kentucky, File No. EB-FIELDSCR-16-00022288

This case highlights how toothless the Commission's approach to broadcast pirates had become under past leadership. How could anyone get away with operating a pirate TV station for almost *twenty years*? No longer a fierce watchdog, the Commission had been reduced to a sometimes annoying, sometimes sleepy, but ultimately harmless Chihuahua when it came to protecting broadcast spectrum licenses. But all pirate operators should be put on notice that we can and we will turn that situation around. I support this Notice of Apparent Liability and look forward to seeing many more to come in this area, if our warnings are not heeded. With pirates crowding legitimate broadcasters out of the spectrum in several of our major metropolitan areas, we can no longer afford to rest. At the same time, the limitations outlined on the proposed forfeiture show that it would be helpful for Congress to revisit and restructure the penalties applicable to pirate broadcasting. More tools in the tool box would come in handy as we implement a reenergized enforcement approach.