

AHAA, Coalition File FCC Petition Over PPM

The groups disagree with Arbitron about the representation of the Hispanic audience sample

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-By Katy Bachman, Mediaweek

NEW YORK The Association of Hispanic Advertising Agencies and the PPM Coalition, a group of minority radio broadcasters, filed an emergency petition late Tuesday with the Federal Communications Commission requesting an investigation into the accuracy of Arbitron's portable people meter methodology.

Arbitron has two portable people meter markets in Houston and Philadelphia and plans to commercialize the PPM service in eight markets by the end of the year. Among those markets: New York, Chicago and Los Angeles.

AHAA's and the PPM Coalition's decision to turn to the FCC, which regulates the airwaves, follows several months of meetings between Arbitron and minority broadcasters, who fear lower ratings and dwindling ad dollars. Last week, the Spanish Radio Association issued a statement expressing its disappointment with Arbitron's PPM methodology.

While supporting electronic measurement, AHAA said it is in "sharp disagreement" with Arbitron about the representation of the Hispanic audience sample. "It could have a devastating impact on the industry, wiping out nearly half of the minority broadcasters," the group said in a statement.

Arbitron countered that the PPM is more accurate than the diary and that the petitioning groups have failed to acknowledge improvements in the quality of Arbitron's minority samples.

Arbitron said: "Our PPM samples are designed to effectively represent the diversity of the African-American and Spanish-language radio marketplace and of all the markets we measure in terms of age, sex, race, ethnicity and Spanish-language preference."

Whether the FCC, which regulates the airwaves, has any jurisdiction may reduce the current controversy to a battle of press releases and statements.

"Arbitron does not believe that the FCC has jurisdiction over the company or its operations and assets and consequently lacks the authority to commence a Section 403 investigation. Nevertheless, we are committed to continue our voluntary meetings with the FCC," Arbitron said.