

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

In the Matter of :)	
)	
Commonwealth Productions)	
)	CSR 5992
)	
Video Programming Accessibility)	
)	
Petition for Waiver of Closed Captioning)	
Requirements)	

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

Adopted: March 25, 2004

Released: March 26, 2004

By the Media Bureau:

I. INTRODUCTION

1. In this Order, we address a petition for exemption from Section 79.1 of the Commission’s rules,¹ implementing Section 713 of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended (the “Act”),² filed by Commonwealth Productions (“Commonwealth”), producers of the television program “Knight & Hale’s Ultimate Hunting” aired on The Outdoor Channel. Telecommunications for the Deaf, Inc. (“TDI”) filed an opposition to the petition for exemption.³ For the reasons discussed below, Commonwealth’s petition is denied, to the extent stated herein.

2. In *Implementation of Section 305 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 – Video Programming Accessibility*, the Commission established rules and implementation schedules for the closed captioning of video programming.⁴ In enacting Section 713, Congress recognized that, in certain limited situations, the costs of captioning might impose an undue burden on video programming providers or owners, and it authorized the Commission to adopt appropriate exemptions.⁵ Congress defined “undue burden” to mean “significant difficulty or expense.”⁶ When determining if the closed captioning requirements will impose an undue burden, the statute requires the Commission to consider the following factors: (1) the nature and cost of the closed captions for the programming; (2) the impact on the

¹ 47 C.F.R. § 79.1.

² 47 U.S.C. § 613.

³ TDI argues that grant of an exemption from the closed captioning rules is not warranted because Petitioner has not provided sufficient evident to demonstrate that an exemption is warranted under the four statutory exemption factors.

⁴ *Implementation of Section 305 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 - Video Programming Accessibility*, 13 FCC Rcd 3272 (1997) (“Report and Order”).

⁵ 47 U.S.C. § 613(d)(1).

⁶ 47 U.S.C. § 613(e).

operation of the provider or program owner; (3) the financial resources of the provider or program owner; and (4) the type of operations of the provider or program owner.⁷ A petition for exemption must be supported by sufficient evidence to demonstrate that compliance with the requirements to close caption video programming would cause an undue burden.⁸ Petitioners also are instructed to submit any other information they deem appropriate and relevant to the Commission's final determination.⁹

II. DISCUSSION

3. Commonwealth submitted a brief petition for exemption requesting a waiver from compliance with the captioning requirements. Commonwealth's petition, however, fails to disclose information regarding its finances and assets, gross or net proceeds, price quotes from various captioning sources, or possible sponsorships solicited for assisting in captioning. Commonwealth provided no documentation from which its financial condition can be assessed. Without such documentation, it is impossible for the Commission to determine whether Commonwealth has sufficient justification supporting an exemption from the closed captioning requirements. Our decision herein is without prejudice to Commonwealth bringing a future petition for exemption that adequately documents that compliance with our rules will impose an undue burden. Implicit in the Section 79.1(f) requirement of a showing as to the financial resources of a petitioner, such as Commonwealth, is the question of the extent to which the distributors of its programming can be called upon to contribute towards the captioning expense. Thus, any subsequent petition should document whether Commonwealth solicited captioning assistance from the distributors of its programming and the response to these solicitations. Absent such a petition, petitioner is given 3 months from the release date of this *Order* to come into complete compliance with the rules.

III. ORDERING CLAUSE

4. Accordingly, **IT IS ORDERED** that the petition for exemption from the closed captioning requirements of Section 79.1 of the Commission's rules **IS DENIED**. Petitioner must comply with the captioning requirements within 3 months from the release date of this *Order*.

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

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Media Bureau

⁷*Id.*; see also 47 C.F.R. § 79.1(f).

⁸47 C.F.R. § 79.1(f)(2).

⁹47 C.F.R. § 79.1(f)(3).