

**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN WILLIAM E. KENNARD ON
ORDER EXTENDING THE CHILDREN'S TELEVISION FILING REQUIREMENT AND
THE NOTICE EXPLORING CHILDREN'S TELEVISION IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

Today, we take another critical step to promote the digital television transition by beginning to outline the rules of the road for broadcasters on how they should serve the needs of children in the digital era.

Television is among the most powerful influences in our children's lives. That influence can be overwhelmingly positive because the medium has incredible potential to educate and enlighten our children. Or, television programs may raise concerns about children's exposure to excessive advertisements or inappropriate content. Broadcasters have an obligation to serve the public interest, including the specific needs of children. Since the passage of the Children's Television Act, broadcasters, parents, child advocates, and government have worked together to provide parents with educational programming choices for their children and to protect children from excessive advertisements.

I am pleased that the Commission is taking steps to further both of those goals in the digital television era. The Report and Order adopted today recognizes the success of the children's educational programming guidelines. By their own reports, broadcasters have been providing not only the required three hours of educational programming each week, but an average of four hours each week. We must continue to ensure that parents have access to this critical information about the educational programming. However, we missed a unique opportunity to advance the public interest in this area by not adding a very simple and logical requirement for broadcasters to describe their efforts to increase the public's awareness of children's programming as disclosed in the Children's Television Programming Reports.

The companion rulemaking we adopt today is forward looking and asks critical and timely questions about how we should adapt our children's educational television guidelines to digital broadcasting. The essential question is how broadcasters can harness the potential of digital technology to better serve children. For example, given the many ways in which broadcasters may choose to use their digital spectrum, we ask specific questions about how the current three-hour processing guideline should apply in a digital multicast environment. We also sought comment on the recommendations of child and consumer advocates who are concerned about whether the current three-hour guideline provides an adequate supply of educational programming for children.

Our children are this Nation's greatest resource and I look forward to a robust debate on these issues.