

**OPENING REMARKS OF
FCC COMMISSIONER KATHLEEN Q. ABERNATHY
THE FUTURE OF TELEVISION AND CHILDREN'S MEDIA POLICY
FEBRUARY 28, 2003**

Thank you for inviting me here to be a part of this roundtable discussion on the future of television and children's media. I feel privileged to be part of such an impressive group and I look forward to learning from all of you, as well as sharing some thoughts. It will take all of our combined efforts to secure our children's future. I thought I would take a few moments to focus on the role of the FCC in this partnership and discuss two areas in particular where the Commission is focusing on how families can benefit from television's digital age. The first is children's television programming rules and the second is ratings and V-chip technology.

Children's Television Rules. The Commission recently requested that parties update the record of our current proceeding on how we should apply our children's television programming rules to digital broadcasting. Digital broadcasting brings many advantages to the public and the industry, including the ability to multicast and offer interactive capabilities. Thus, we need to look at how our current policies are affected by these new technologies. For example, in the past, we have been concerned that local or network preemptions may thwart the goals of the Children's Television Act of 1990. Should our policy permitting limited preemptions change in light of a digital broadcaster's ability to multicast? Advances in technology bring not only benefits, but also unexpected harms. Thus, we have asked how our rules on commercial limits should be interpreted given the potential for interactive capabilities that could include the direct sale of goods and services over television to children.

V-Chip/Ratings. I am also pleased that the Commission recently asked for public comment on how the Commission can ensure that V-chip functionality is available in the digital world. But I want to ensure not only that the V-chip continues to work, but that we are able to benefit from our experience with the current ratings system. Closed V-chip technology, which is part of many analog television sets, is unable to identify any changes that may be made to the existing ratings system, whereas an open V-chip technology would allow television sets to recognize future modifications. Recognizing that the ability to adjust the content advisory system is beneficial, the Commission recently sought comment on how it could ensure that flexibility is maintained in any digital television standard that we adopt.

There is no doubt that as children become more sophisticated in their use of technology, all of us -- parents, teachers, researchers, elected and appointed officials -- must redouble our efforts to ensure we can adequately supervise and direct our children's television viewing.