

**Remarks of FCC Commissioner Kathleen Abernathy
To the Consumer Advisory Committee
Federal Communications Commission -- April 25, 2003
As prepared for delivery.**

First, I would like to thank you for providing me with an opportunity to say a few words at today's inaugural meeting of the Consumer Advisory Committee. This Committee allows the FCC to tap into the expertise of diverse and esteemed representatives of many companies, organizations and consumer representatives to learn what else we can do to address consumer concerns and to facilitate the participation of consumers in FCC proceedings. I am already anxiously looking forward to receiving the Committee's recommendations.

With that said, I do not think this will be an easy task. The Committee's mission is monumental and cuts across the gambit of consumer issues including access to telecommunications services by people with disabilities, consumer protection and education, increasing consumer participation in FCC rulemaking proceedings, and the availability of new technologies. Despite these challenges, I firmly believe that the members of this Committee are up to the task.

Today I would like to spend a few minutes to discuss two areas of interest to me that I hope the Committee will address. The first issue is one that I have been increasingly vocal on – ensuring that information is readily available for parents to help them guide their children's television viewing. As a working mother of a seven year old daughter, I know how difficult it can be to guide my own child's viewing patterns – even when I have programming information.

While broadcasters, cable companies and others are delivering amazing new content focused on informing and educating our children, as parents we have a need to know more about how to access that content. To that end, I have been working with the Consumer and Government Affairs Bureau to set up a new Parents Page on the FCC Website. It should provide parents with another asset so we can be more proactive in determining which programming is appropriate for our children. Specifically, the Parent's Page explains the broadcaster's children's educational and informational programming requirements and provides links to stations that are willing to make this type of programming schedule available. It explains how the V-chip works, and other blocking options, what the ratings system is, what our indecency rules prohibit, and how to file an indecency complaint. I believe that having this information together on a single page that is focused on parents will improve our ability to provide useful information to the public because it is only with knowledge that can parents make informed decisions. I look forward to any additional recommendations the Committee can make in this area to help strengthen this website.

Another area that I am looking forward to hearing from the Committee on is consumer education for senior citizens. With the graying of the baby boomer generation, which I, myself, am a part of, the population of senior citizens in this country will continue to grow exponentially over the next few years.

Unfortunately, older Americans are often the most susceptible to unscrupulous tactics or are unaware of their rights because of the lack of consumer information available to them. In addition, many times these Americans do not have sufficient information about many of the innovative telecommunications services, technologies and/or programs that are available and

might assist them on a day to day basis. I am extremely interested in hearing the Committee's recommendations on how the FCC can ensure that senior citizens have adequate information on which to base their communications decisions.

These are just a couple of the key issues that I am sure this Committee will address. Needless to say, there are countless more covering many other equally important areas which will also serve as the focus of your discussions. I look forward to reviewing the Committee's recommendations on all issues which you discuss and I would like to personally thank each member of the Committee for volunteering their service.