

Separate Statement of Commissioner Jonathan S. Adelstein

Re: Children's Television Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters, Report and Order, Docket No. 00-167

Quality educational and informational television can enlighten our children, feed their curiosity, and teach fundamental skills, ethics and behaviors for our society. I thank the Chairman and my colleagues for their commitment to this exceptionally valuable proceeding.

Today we've taken serious steps to update our rules and policies to protect children. We provide certainty for broadcasters to know how their obligation to serve the child audience translates in the digital world. We offer parents more and better information to help their children make appropriate viewing choices. And we recognize that new technologies can lead to previously unimagined enriching educational experiences, while we take care to prevent potential new harms.

Congress has affirmed the need for broadcasters to protect and serve children. Broadcasters must provide programming specifically designed to serve the particular needs of children, which is examined during license renewals. Like other providers of programming aimed at young children, they also must protect children from excessive commercialization. In enacting the legislation, the House Report clearly states that the presence of cable and VCRs "does not obviate the public interest responsibility of individual broadcast licensees to serve the child audience," and that "total reliance on marketplace forces is neither sufficient nor justified to protect children from potential exploitation by advertising or commercial practices."¹

These same principles must be reinforced not just in today's television environment but for the onset of digital television and tomorrow's launch into interactive television. In all its forms, television continues to play an influential role in a child's life. Nearly all children watch television before their first exposure to formal education. Children watch on average three hours of television per day, and more than half of all children have a television in their bedroom. Without appropriate safeguards, we run the risk that our children become captive to increasingly invasive advertising. Most broadcasters today steadfastly serve their child audience. Our policies are designed to ensure that all broadcasters will.

Digital television offers vast educational potential. It provides an opportunity for broadcasters to nurture the emotional, cognitive, behavioral and other needs of children through more and better educational and informational programming. As broadcasters choose to multicast, for example, their expanded capacity can be used proportionately to further the needs of their young viewers. Indeed, we give broadcasters the flexibility to outdo one another in how they bring this programming to children using their multiple programming streams.

¹ *Children's Television Act of 1990*, H.R. Rep. 101-385 at 6 (1989).

There is much more work to do to provide broadcasters and the public with certainty regarding the entirety of their public interest obligations in the digital era. I welcome what I expect will be an equally constructive dialogue on resolving how the remaining public interest obligations translate to digital. The high level of cooperation in this proceeding bodes well for also achieving consensus on the broader public interest examination in the weeks to come.

While this is merely the start, our children are our future and I'm delighted we stepped up to protect them. Our children should be the ones exploiting the potential of digital television, and not the other way around.