

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER DEBORAH TAYLOR TATE**

Re: Children's Television Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters, Second Order on Reconsideration and Second Report and Order (MM Docket 00-167)

Television commands a prominent place in our daily lives and, more importantly, in the lives of our children. In fact, just last week, Nielsen Media Research reported that, despite growing competition from all types of emerging media platforms and devices, such as video iPods, cell phones, and streaming video over the Internet from websites like the wildly popular YouTube.com, traditional television viewing in the average household reached another record high this year: 8 hours and 14 minutes a day. Younger children age 2-11 increased their total viewing levels by 4 percent, and teenage girls increased theirs by 6 percent. Research like this, as well as our common sense, confirms that we – as a society – must continue to look for ways to ensure that television has a positive effect on our children's lives. There is simply no doubt that what children watch shapes their values, choices, and actions.

I am, therefore, extremely pleased to vote today to adopt this item, in which we clarify and revise our children's television rules in accord with a joint proposal filed by representatives of the media industry and a coalition of child advocacy groups. Thank you to all who contributed to the joint proposal for your efforts over the past two years. It is a great example of the private dispute resolution that I have advocated throughout my career. I believe that it achieves an appropriate balance between broadcasters' need for flexibility in exploring the potential uses of their digital spectrum and our statutory obligation, set forth in the Children's Television Act of 1990, to ensure that the educational needs of our children are met in today's digital and increasingly commercial environment. I also believe that our action today will significantly benefit families all across America.

Congress and the Commission have long recognized that, as trustees of the public airwaves, television broadcast stations have a special obligation to provide programming that benefits society by educating and informing children. Today, we reaffirm the extension of that obligation to the digital age by requiring that, if a broadcaster chooses to offer additional news, sports, and entertainment programming on multiple digital program streams, it also must provide additional children's programming, no more than half of which may repeat program episodes aired earlier in the week. As these rules go into effect, I hope that broadcasters will surpass this minimal requirement and take advantage of digital technology to create a more robust and diverse children's television environment.

Congress and the Commission have also recognized the need to protect children from excessive and inappropriate commercial messages, resulting in the enactment of regulations such as commercial time limits, separation between commercials and program material, and the prohibition of "host selling." This recognition stems from research that shows that children under the age of eight lack the cognitive development to understand the persuasive intent of television advertising and are uniquely susceptible to

its influence. Nonetheless, advertising directed toward children remains a big business, valued at between \$800 and \$900 million annually, according to an article in the *Wall Street Journal* earlier this year. Today, we update our regulations to protect “generation i,” the first generation of our children to grow up with the Internet, by significantly restricting the commercial nature and content of websites that are promoted during program material.

Finally, while I fully support this item and believe that it will lead to the creation of more and better quality children’s programming, our children cannot benefit from this much needed additional programming if they cannot see it. I will continue to be vigilant in calling on cable and satellite operators, as well as new entrants to the video programming market like Verizon and AT&T, to carry more family-friendly programs. It’s the right thing to do.