

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER KATHLEEN Q. ABERNATHY**

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

As a country, we have always protected, nurtured and educated our children. We recognize they are a precious resource, and that our future as a nation is inextricably intertwined with their future. That is why today we embrace a regulatory framework that recognizes the significant role media plays in shaping and educating our children. Today we look to the future and the many benefits, as well as potential harms, that are inherent in our digital migration. Today, we ensure that children will benefit from an increase in educational and information (E/I) programming, that such programming will be easier for parents to find, and that the regulations we have in place to protect children from over-commercialization cannot be circumvented by new technologies.

Perhaps most importantly, we require that the amount of programming available for children will increase exponentially with the amount of programming a broadcaster airs. As broadcasters begin to provide additional streams of digital programming, children will receive a part of those benefits. For example, on an all-news channel, a broadcaster can provide a weekly segment that explains the top stories to children of varying ages, much like the Kids Page that is part of the Washington Post. At the same time, we are giving broadcasters the flexibility to provide this programming in a manner that responds to the needs of families. For example, we allow broadcasters to place most of their E/I programming on one channel, making it easier for parents to direct their children to appropriate content. We also allow broadcasters to use some repeat programming per week since studies show young children learn better through repetitive messages. At the same time, we are ensuring that a sufficient amount of new programming is provided on a weekly basis.

We also recognize that advances in technology bring not only benefits, but unexpected harms. As technology develops and internet access and interactivity are offered through programs directed toward children, parents must be involved. Although I recognize we need to explore this issue further, I am pleased that we tentatively concluded that interactive features that bring a child to commercial material should not be permitted absent parental approval. And, as we continue to explore these issues, we also clearly state that broadcasters and cable companies cannot circumvent our rules on commercial limits in children's programming through the use of interactivity and other technological developments.

Finally, we all need to increase our efforts to help parents make informed choices about their children's viewing. This has been one of my main goals during my tenure at the FCC, and why I worked on the development of The Parents Place web page. (www.fcc.gov/parents). While it is important to focus on what children should not be watching, it is equally important to provide parents the tools to navigate the programming options that are available to them so they can tap into the numerous, creative and educational programs currently available.

Today, we take several steps in this direction by requiring broadcasters to provide E/I information throughout the duration of the program, rather than for a few brief seconds at the beginning of the program. We also require that the symbol identifying educational programming be uniform across all platforms. I believe this will empower parents and enable broadcasters to better serve the interests of their communities. Yet, the progress we make today should not be confined to the four corners of this document. I continue to encourage broadcasters and cable programmers to build on the success of many of today's children's programs and work with us to make it easier for parents to learn more about the educational value of the programming that is offered.

We have a unique opportunity to tap into new technologies to educate and inform children and parents. We must not squander this opportunity by inactivity or lack of creativity.