

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER MICHAEL J. COPPS**

Re: Children's Television Obligations of Digital Television Broadcasters

In the Children's Television Act, Congress directed the Commission to protect children against excessive advertisements on television and required the Commission to consider during the license renewal process whether a station's programming has served the educational and informational needs of children. This is absolutely vital. Television plays such an enormous role in children's development. The average child will have watched well over 10,000 hours of television and been bombarded with hundreds of thousands of commercials before he or she reaches adulthood. Television has vast and growing powers to educate and inform — or to misinform in sometimes harmful ways.

One important responsibility that we on this Commission have is to make sure, as best we can, that everyone — certainly including the kids—can harvest the full benefits of digital television. I commend those who met to formulate the proposals that are the subject of today's further notice. Groups such as Children Now, the American Psychological Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National PTA, the United Church of Christ, the Action Coalition for Media Education and the Institute for Public Representation at Georgetown University, as well as representatives from broadcast networks and cable channels, worked long and hard to reach these joint recommendations.

The ball is in our court now to move forward as expeditiously as possible to complete this proceeding. I am hopeful we will do just that. But that's not all we need to do. Let's remember that, in the children's TV order adopted in September 2004, we also committed to issuing a report addressing how well the objectives set by Congress in the Children's Television Act are being met. We should all be concerned—even disturbed—when independent reports find that one-fourth of the educational and informational programming served up to our children has little educational value. Likewise, we should all be concerned when a recent study by the Parents Television Council demonstrates that there are nearly eight violent incidents per hour on children's shows — more than during primetime. Think about that one for a moment!

Once again, I point out how much work is left undone regarding the more general public interest obligations of DTV broadcasters. As an initial step, we need promptly to complete our proceeding on disclosure of broadcaster activities. And the Commission is long overdue to address the full range of public interest issues that we teed up six years ago, including, among others, how the digital transition can enhance political discourse, improve access to the media for those with disabilities, and increase localism, diversity and competition on the people's airwaves. I would like to think that this example of discussions and a joint proposal by diverse interested parties that we are talking about today in the children's television item can serve as a model for these other proceedings. We really can't delay any longer in bringing some certainty for both broadcasters and the public. It is not enough for us to address only the mechanics of the DTV transition. More important by far is determining how this transition is to serve the broad interests of American viewers and listeners. With a full complement of Commissioners soon to be aboard, these questions deserve the full attention of the Commission.