

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN JULIUS GENACHOWSKI**

Re: *Empowering Parents and Protecting Children in an Evolving Media Landscape, MB Docket No. 09-194*

Today's Notice comes almost 20 years after enactment of the Children's Television Act (CTA). The CTA was enacted by Congress in 1990 to serve the dual purposes of promoting educational and informational programming for children and placing limits on commercial advertising to which children are exposed while watching TV.

As I stated in my testimony before the Senate in July, revisiting the Act after almost two decades, three points stand out: First, children remain our most precious national resource and it is as essential as ever to ensure that our kids are educated, healthy, and prepared for the 21st century, and that they are protected from commercial exploitation.

Second, television continues to have a powerful effect on our children, and broadcast television remains a unique medium, the exclusive source of video programming relied upon by millions of households, and a very significant source for millions of others. The Commission's responsibility to enforce the Children's Television's Act remains vital.

Third, much has changed since the Act was passed in 1990. The bottom line is that twenty years ago, parents worried about one or two TV sets in the house. Today, children have access to a variety of media platforms, digital tv, computers, mobile phones and smart phones to name a few, and interact with them in ways that could not have been imagined in 1990. Multi-channel video programming has grown dramatically, significantly expanding the programming choices of viewers who can afford pay television. The Internet has vastly proliferated, with younger Americans as the leading edge. Video games have become a prevalent entertainment source in millions of homes and a daily reality for millions of kids. Mobile services have increased significantly, with mobile devices becoming more and more commonplace for kids.

I'm hopeful that the evolving media landscape will produce innovation and new business models to increase the amount of educational programming and content available to all children, and enhance the ability of parents to pick and choose. Studies show that television – like Sesame Street, Sprout, and others -- can benefit children. The Notice asks whether the Commission's current rules implementing the CTA are effective in promoting the availability of educational and information content for the child audience and seeks comment on the quality and amount of such programming, among many other questions.

Today's Notice also comes after our recent report on the Child Safe Viewing Act. The proliferation of media devices available to children creates important concerns about the content to which children have access and the impact of that content.

This Notice of Inquiry recognizes the importance of undertaking a comprehensive approach to assessing how children can best be served in the digital media landscape. It will examine both the risks

and the benefits of emerging media technologies. We are seeking data and comments that will help us address these questions.

I am a firm believer in the role technology can play in people's lives, and this is especially applicable to children. But the explosion of new technologies has also significantly increased the availability of inappropriate content and elevated parents' concerns. The vital role of government in this media environment is therefore to empower parents and protect children, while honoring and abiding by the First Amendment. Specifically, the Commission should work to ensure that parents have access to a full range of information and tools in exercising their essential responsibilities. They should easily be able to find those tools, to learn about programming choices that educate, entertain and inform their children, and to take action they deem appropriate. In a digital world, technology can and should be part of the solution.

But the Commission must also remain cognizant of the responsibilities and opportunities for the private sector as well. This media landscape has the potential to produce innovation and new business models to increase the amount of educational programming and content available to all children, while enhancing parents' ability to pick and choose. We remain optimistic that the same ingenuity that has driven some of the remarkable innovations in media thus far will also be the creative spark that leads to new and powerful tools that will help parents protect their children and provide them with access to educational resources and programming options that best suit their children's needs.

The challenges of an emerging media landscape will only become more complex as technology continues to evolve, so it is essential that we enable parents to assist their children in harnessing the benefits of emerging media while protecting them from harmful content. Accordingly, we must also determine whether improved media literacy can assist parents in this regard and whether existing literacy resources are sufficient to achieve these ends. Knowledge is power, so the more we can do to help parents navigate this landscape the better.

The information that we are seeking is broad in its scope and in its range, but this data will help drive policy that will allow us to derive the maximum benefits from these emerging media technologies. I am optimistic that this will help foster public and private solutions to the challenges that these technologies present.