UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Assistant Secretary for Communications and Information
Washington, D.C. 20230

May 12, 1987

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Office of the Secretary

Honorable Dennis R. Patrick
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: RM-5811

Dear Chairman Patrick:

Spurred by the demonstration of one of the developing high definition television (HDTV) systems earlier this year, several broadcasting concerns have requested that the Commission establish an inquiry on HDTV and other advanced video technologies. In light of the numerous questions and complex issues surrounding the HDTV issue, I recommend that the Commission grant the Petition and adopt a Notice of Inquiry on the introduction of advanced television technologies.

While HDTV presents numerous advantages over the present television system, the introduction of this technology may create complex problems. The increased clarity and sharpness of HDTV pictures and the improved aspect ratio will undoubtedly make such a system popular with consumers. It seems likely, however, that a significantly higher resolution transmission will require more bandwidth than currently assigned to local television broadcasters. In addition, serious questions are raised by the introduction of any system incompatible with NTSC technology.

It is essential that we facilitate broadcasting's capacity to remain abreast of technological developments. Terrestrial broadcasting is the heart of local video information and news. We must not knowingly hurt this medium. A comprehensive inquiry on advanced television technologies would enable the Commission to explore the technical issues raised by the introduction of these systems as well as the future role of local broadcasters in the provision of HDTV service.

Sincerely,

Alfred C. Sikes

cc: James H. Quello, Commissioner
Mimi Weyforth Dawson, Commissioner
Patricia Diaz Dennis, Commissioner
William J. Tricarico, Secretary

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