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ABC Affiliate

September 11, 1995

Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street NW
Washington, DC 20554

Subject: MM Docket No. 93-48

Dear Secretary:

I am the General Manager of the ABC Affiliate in the 73rd market, Rochester, New York. I need to have you understand that I believe the Children's Television Act is working. Broadcasters are seeking and finding ways to get educational and informational programming onto the local broadcast schedule. While broadcasters in my size market cannot throw hundreds of thousands of dollars at local production, there are ways to creatively take existing materials and blend them with local elements to make them viable for the child viewers in the Rochester area.

Among my concerns with discussed rule "tightening" is that numerical levels of programming will most certainly have a chilling effect on what I see as a qualitative approach that we are undertaking now in Rochester. A side bar to that issue is the question of who will determine what is educational and who will decide what level of information must be dispensed by a program to be deemed "informational".

We are embarking on a project for a January 1996 start that will use the "Success by Six" element of the United Way to provide programming to inform our viewers about the crucial need to reach and nurture children in our community before they reach the age of six. Obviously, the program length elements will certainly meet the current definitions of the Act; however, a vital part of our multi-pronged effort is the use of shorter elements to reach kids where we know they are already watching other programming on our air. Should these not be recognized as meaningful or impactful simply because they were not "X" minutes long? What about the elements of this effort that are aimed at older teens and adults to raise their awareness and understanding of the problems so they can help in their own families or volunteer to aid efforts already underway in our city to help the children?

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Secretary

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September 11, 1995

Should these efforts not count because the programming or vignettes are not specifically aimed at a certain aged child? Shorter segments of programming should count in our efforts to reach and help the children of our community. These elements may be the only way to reach some children who are not going to willingly be driven to view longer length programming.

The rules are working. The discussed rule making will not increase the effectiveness or usefulness of educational and informational programming for children. I urge you to not make changes. The Act and the FCC rules are working and the children's programming area has grown dramatically since passage of the Act.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my comments.

Sincerely,

Gary R. Nielsen

Gary R. Nielsen

President and General Manager

smg

smg

c Chairman Reed Hundt, FCC
Commissioner James Quello, FCC
Commissioner Andrew Barrett, FCC
Commissioner Susan Ness, FCC
Commissioner Rachelle Chong, FCC

Federal Communications Commission
Office of the Secretary
1919 M Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

500 W. College PKwy E120
Carson City, NV 89706
September 8, 1995

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Re: MM Docket 93-48

We (70x73) are working with the Boy and Girls Club (many children of dysfunctional families).

Ergo, belated efforts by Fox, and indifference from the major networks will not suffice as a substitute for WIDE promotion of the enclosed (U.S. News and World Report - "What TV-Savvy Parents can do to Help Their Kids"). The idea of a chip to lock out programs (at extra cost) is in its infancy, and we do not believe * it is viable.

Some we are of the 77% who do not have cable (the worst offenders), the competition of all these channels caters to what they believe (sex and violence) the market demands.

The major channels have done a good job (so far) in their specific programs for educating children (especially ABC - Before Dinner). *

Our Constitution unfortunately allows freedom of expression. Ergo, educate the parents by emphasizing what can be done to HELP their KIDS.

We (the USA) cannot support a system where people like McFall and of Fox have only to protect their employees, nor can we support a group such as the motion picture industry that is powerless!
A DILEMMA?

Very truly yours,

Ernie & Joe Trinastri

ENCL: USNWR A Guide To Media Literacy
1 possible approach!!

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estimate, based on an analysis of 275 studies by George Comstock, S. I. Newhouse professor of public communication at Syracuse University, is that perhaps 10 percent of antisocial and illegal acts can be linked to TV. "But wouldn't it be great if we could reduce the occurrence of violence in this nation by 10 percent?" asks Eron.

Family fare? Fans of family TV won't find much to cheer about in the fall 1995 season. "More channels doesn't mean more choices," says Kathryn Montgomery of the Center for Media Education, an advocacy group in Washington, D.C. In fact, one of the best family dramas on television, CBS's "Christy," was canceled this spring despite a slew of awards. "Christy," the story of a young teacher in backwoods Tennessee in 1912, had superb writing and acting—and lovely lessons about life with nary an ounce of schmaltz or sex, violence or swearing. The audience of about 10 million weekly viewers was "fairly substantial and intensely loyal," says David Poltrack, executive vice president of research and planning for CBS. But the young adults whom advertisers crave weren't watching in force, so "Christy" got the ax. Reruns will air on the Family Channel on Saturdays at 7 p.m. starting in October.

Since most new network shows weren't designed with a family audience in mind, Warner Bros. new WB network is trying to fill the 8 to 9 p.m. void with "family-friendly" fare. On the menu this fall: a fairly clever cartoon called "Steven Spielberg Presents Pinky & the Brain" on Sundays at 7 p.m., about a smart lab rat trying to take over the world, and supposedly wholesome sitcoms that are, in fact, generally mediocre and occasionally offensive. In "Kirk," the lame tale of an older brother who assumes custody of three siblings, the younger brother brags of peeping into a nearby apartment and seeing a beautiful woman in a "Wonderbra and nothing else." Turns out the gal is a guy, even though he has "girl things."

Raunchy family fare is nothing new. In an episode of CBS's "The Nanny," a returning show that pitches itself to kids with promos during cartoons, the nanny comes home drunk and mistakenly stumbles into bed with her cold-ridden boss. The next day, neither can recall if they had sex. "We try to do a sophisticated 8 p.m. show," says "Nanny" Co-executive Producer Diane Wilk. "We wouldn't want to put anything on the air we wouldn't want our children to see." Counters Debra Haffner, president of the Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States: "I wouldn't let my 10-year-old daughter watch 'The Nanny'—or practically any other prime-

A GUIDE TO MEDIA LITERACY

What TV-savvy parents can do to help their kids

As TV gets wilder and wilder, more parents are opting to junk television altogether. Those not ready for this drastic step can find solace in media literacy—the art of deconstructing television. Schools in Canada have taught media literacy for years, explaining to students that programs exist to deliver an audience to advertisers, that sex and violence

\$8.95); "Taking Charge of Your TV," from the National PTA and the cable-television industry (free copies from 800-743-5355 or <http://www.widmeyer.com/ncta/home.htm> on the Internet); and guides from the Center for Media Literacy (call 800-226-9494 for a free catalog).

3. Be choosy. You wouldn't stroll into a library and pick up the first book, and you shouldn't just turn on the TV and watch whatever's on. Media literacy mavens suggest choosing a week's worth of programs in advance. Sorry, no channel surfing.

4. Watch with them. Unless parents are confident that a show is safe for youngsters (rarely the case these days), they should watch with their kids, then talk about controversial content. Sample queries: "Why was that the lead story on the news?" "Could a cop really be back at work a week after be-



PHOTOFEET

TV talk. Roseanne can kick off a parent-child chat.

ing shot in the chest?" "When the star of the sitcom decided to have sex with a woman he just met, should she have suggested that he use a condom?"

5. Just say no. And also why—which means you first need to watch the series in question. "My daughter, who's 11, wanted to see 'Married... With Children,'" says Karen Jaffe of Kidsnet, a children's media resource center in Washington, D.C. "I said no. I don't like the way the parents talk to the kids or the kids talk to the parents."

6. Media literacy isn't a cure-all. No child can be immunized against all the bad stuff on TV. So parents (and children) need to make their objections known. Letters to the local station, with a copy to the local newspapers and the FCC, can carry weight, especially if you use the words feared by TV executives: "failing to serve the public interest" and "doesn't deserve to have its license renewed."

sell and that TV news isn't all the news that's fit to air—it's more likely the news that gets the best ratings. American schools are just beginning to catch up. Here are six key precepts for a crash course at home.

1. Rethink your image of TV. Newton Minow, former chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, suggests imagining a stranger in your house blathering on to you and your children about sex and violence all day long. No one dares interrupt or tell the stranger to shut up or get out. That stranger is your TV set.

2. Keep a diary. Ask your kids how much TV they think they watch. Then have them write down everything they watch for a week. Parents might do the same. Both generations may be shocked by the results. A reasonable goal for kids: two hours a day. Several primers help with this and other steps: *The Smart Parent's Guide to Kids' TV* by Milton Chen (KQED Books, 1994,

NEWS YOU CAN USE

time show—without me, so I can discuss the sexual messages with her.”

Smart TV. On Saturday mornings, network cynicism is symbolized by ABC's culling of "Cro," one of the few genuinely educational cartoons around. "Cro" wasn't the greatest show ever produced by the Children's Television Workshop, creators of "Sesame Street." But it managed to tuck science lessons into the adventures of a prehistoric tribe and did win its time slot last season. ABC says the show "underperformed." As "Cro" bowed out, an animated version of the movie *Dumb and Dumber* joined ABC's Saturday lineup. "This is beyond irony," says Reed Hundt, chairman of the Federal Communications Commission. "Dumb and Dumber" is a description of this decision, not just a title.

PBS still has a fine roster of educational fare. But "Ghostwriter," a popular show for ages 6 to 11 that stresses reading skills in the mysteries it weaves, will have no new episodes, just reruns. Corporate money dried up for the series, and two commercial networks weren't interested in new episodes for Saturday mornings. "Wishbone," a new PBS daily series, debuting October 9 and aimed at the same age group, is a strange breed. The eponymous star is a terrier who imagines himself in literary works like *Romeo and Juliet*. The dog is appealing, yet a purist might wonder if this is the best way to introduce kids to great literature.

But "Wishbone" is a gem compared with Disney's new, allegedly educational syndicated series "Sing Me a Story: With Belle." To keep costs down, Disney is recycling old cartoons with new didactic voiceovers. In one episode, the lesson is: Friends are good, friends are good, friends are good. The live-action host is Belle, star of *Beauty and the Beast*.

Nevertheless, Disney could be the salvation of family-friendly television when it takes over ABC. Dean Valentine, president of Walt Disney Television and Television Animation, predicts the glut of adult-oriented 8 p.m. shows will provide an opening for something different. "In the next year or two, the hit shows will be family programs from Disney at 8 p.m.," he says.

Parents don't have to just sit and wait for better TV. Public outrage can play a role in retooling the media—that's why Calvin Klein decided last week to pull controversial ads for jeans depicting young people in various stages of undress. Then, again, few have lost money being mass in the vast wasteland. ■

BY MARY SHABER



On the set. Even "Married... With Children" has to meet basic standards at Fox. Those

The Bundys meet the censors at Fox

You should see what hits the cutting-room floor

Roland McFarland races across town in his black Aurora toward Sony Pictures Entertainment. He arrives at Stage 24 just minutes before the cameras start rolling for the season premiere of "Married... With Children." Upstairs in the greenroom, the 22-year-old vice president of broadcast standards at Fox Broadcasting—the person who in simpler times was known as the censor—joins about a dozen writers, producers and network executives facing a wall of video monitors.

It isn't long before "Married... With Children," the longest-running sitcom on the air today, lives up to its reputation for raunchiness. In the first

scene, Peggy Bundy, the first lady of dysfunctional families, is watching TV. An announcer says: "Next, a word from Earth Pads. The only feminine hygiene product recycled from yesterday's garbage." Although the line bothered McFarland when he first read it, he decides to let it slide.

But in the next scene, when a character tells shoe salesman Al Bundy that she's "menstruating like a bandit," McFarland shakes his head and sighs. He scratches out "menstruating" in the script and pencils in "bloated" and later "cramping." After the show, McFarland raises his concern with Executive Producer Richard Gurman, who puts up a fight ("It's biologi-





CORNERSTONE
TELEVISION

September 12, 1995

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FCC MAIL ROOM

Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554

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RE: The Notice of Proposed Rule Making in regards to the Children's Television Act
MM Docket No. 93-48

Dear Secretary:

Cornerstone TeleVision (WPCB-TV 40 Pittsburgh, PA; WKBS-TV 47 Altoona, PA; WOCD-TV 55 Amsterdam, NY) has 24 hours of inspirational and family programming. We commend you for the recognition of the importance of children's television programming. Even before the Children's Television Act we promoted the importance of quality programming for children. While we understand that your intentions are to improve children's programming with newly proposed rules and "quotas," we feel that these measures are unnecessary for the following reasons:

The Children's Television Act has already achieved its goal of improving children's television programming. We, as a Broadcaster, believe we clearly understand the current definition of "educational and informational children's programming," and no change is needed. We call your attention to the fact that there has already been a significant increase in children's educational and informational programming in response to the Children's Television Act. In addition, as regards quantification, we see a potential danger of setting a minimum standard. Television is a medium that encourages maximum effort to ensure attentive response from viewers. We enjoy a natural environment of healthy competition. Creativity in children's programming could become stifled by quotas that potentially set standards that reduce quality

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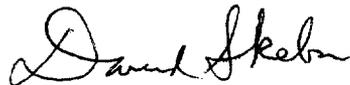
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instead of improving it. We are convinced that rules with quantitative guidelines are unnecessary.

Finally, we would like to call your attention to the success of children's short segment programming which is recognized as important to children. Credit is due to Broadcasters for already incorporating this type of programming.

We offer the above opinions for the express purpose of causing you to reconsider the proposed changes in tightening the rules of the Children's Television Act. We believe the Act is currently fulfilling its original intention.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David Skeba".

David Skeba
Vice President/Director of Programming

DS/jb

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MM 93-48
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From: Charles T Grubb - Personal Account <ctgqalty@mercury.interpath.net>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 9/13/95 6:43am
Subject: TV for Children

SEP 13 1995

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

First, let me thank you for establishing this format for commenting on issues related to children's television. On a personal level I deal with this issue every day as the father of a seven and ten year old. The reality is that cable and access have, in my judgement, done virtually nothing to enhance the quality of televisions broadcasts for either children or adults. I have a cable system with approximately 40 channels (I do not subscribe to any premium channels). Typically, there is nothing for any of us to watch. Most of the channels are devoted to the now pervasive info-commercials which I would personally ban.

What passes for children's television is an insult to the American people. Were it not for The Learning Channel and Discovery there would be very, very little that I would allow my children to watch on television. While no television is allowed Monday through Thursday in our home because they are "school nights" and homework is the priority, I still have to deal with monitoring the television over the weekend. Even at times of the day when you would think you should be safe (e.g., 5-7 pm weekdays, and 7am - noon on weekends) you can never be sure exactly what they will encounter as they channel surf. During the week what now passes as "talk shows" presents the most bazzarr people and stories that can be imagined. How would you explain to a seven year old why some teenager had had their tongue and genitals pierced with some ornament?

The sit-coms aired between 5 and 7 demand no less monitoring. In my judgement there is far too much sexual innuendo and lack of respect for parents, teachers, and other "authority" figures in many of these episodes.

The litany of cartoons offered on weekends is not much better. On average you have a 40/60 chance that they are not watching something that has more violent acts per minute than the adult shows on the networks aired after 9 at night. The fact that it is cartoon violence does not make it any less violent nor diminish the impact on the imagination of a young child. Let us also not forget the commercials that dominate weekend mornings on television. Opponents of regulating children's television should talk with the marketing people who sell Saturday morning spots and learn about the influence of the under 18 year olds on family expenditures on everything from cereal to toys and electronic equipment.

A word about the V-chip. Why should I have to pay to keep something objectionable out of my house? Why shouldn't those who want their children to view this trash have to pay to get it into their homes?

There are, of course, bright spots on television. As mentioned previously, the Learning Channel and Discovery Channel are wonderful as is Public Broadcasting. And, occasionally, the networks offer something worthwhile, usually in the form of some special. Unfortunately, however, I cannot name a single regularly scheduled show on television that is so compelling or of such quality that we as a family would arrange to watch it on a regular basis.

I could go on, but I am sure that the volume of input you receive on this subject is mountainous. Let me close with this thought; if challenged to locate a "G" rated movie at the local video rental store OR find a needle in a haystack in the shortest time, go for the needle.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Charles Taylor Grubb, Ph.D.

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
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From: JENNIE DOVE <acxjd@trex.oscs.montana.edu>
To: A16.A16(93-48)
Date: 9/12/95 6:45pm
Subject: MM Docket 93-48

HELPIII

If the FCC won't do something about what children are exposed to on television, who will? Congress is too busy arguing with each other. I would love to see more educational programs on television for children. We need more programs like Sesame Street! Thank God for PBS, Nickelodeon, and The Learning Channel. Unfortunately, the child-oriented shows end at about 11:00 in the morning. My son does not watch TV ALL day, but it would be nice to have educational childrens shows that stretch throughout the day without having to subscribe to a special cable channel. I can remember growing up and coming home from school and seeing The Brady Bunch, After School Specials, and Grammar Rock. You learned something from each of these shows -- even the Brady Bunch always had kind of a "moral of the story"!

I am all for toughening regulations and enforcement of the Children's Television Act. According to the e-mail message I received, stations are submitting shows such as "The Jetsons," "G.I. Joe", and "The Flintstones" as educational programming, and one station even submitted "Beverly Hills 90210" as "educational". How could they do that?

Some stations have cartoons on that I think are horrible -- full of violence or misbehaving kids that are supposed to be funny. I also think there are FAR too many police shows on the air - the type where a cameraman rides along in the squad car and films real arrests, etc (Real Stories of the Highway Patrol, Cops). I am so surprised to see the number of these types of shows on the different channels! What kind of people do you think would sit around and enjoy this type of show?

When you compare the types of television shows that are on the air now with the shows that were aired 25 or more years ago, you can kind of see how things have gotten so screwed up can't you? Everything has become so senseless in the media. I truly believe that the media is mostly responsible for the rise in crime. It would be easy for me to go on and on about this subject, but I think that the FCC REALLY needs toughen its regulations on ALL television programs -- and a very important start is increasing the number of educational programs for children. I think a substantial length would be a MINIMUM of 30 minutes.

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From: L Meza <aq543@lafm.org>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 9/12/95 7:26pm
Subject: TV

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Why did it take 50 years for you to realize that you're supposed to look out for our interests? WE own the airwaves. They belong to all of us. We want them back.

I hope and pray that you don't back down. The broadcasters are going to play hardball. As stewards of OUR airwaves, it is incumbent upon you to not back down in the face of a pretty dollar.

A tv in every home. The television is a spigot of advertising that few of us really need. What we need is a spigot of education.

- just rallying the troops-

Do it; please stick it, finally, to the broadcasters and their money -grubbing colleagues.

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From: Charles Balogh <balogh@Glue.umd.edu>
To: FCCMAIL.SMTP("kidstv@chemserv.umd.edu")
Date: 9/13/95 11:31am
Subject: New rules for children's educational T.V.

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Didn't you guys get the message after the last election? Enough is enough. We already have too many rules and regulations in this country. The answer isn't in more regulations, it's in deregulation. If you really want to improve children's T.V. dor the following:

- 1) Make television broadcast liceanses easier to get. Your concerns should be only the following:
 - a) That the person getting the liceance has the technical know how to opperate a T.V station.
 - b) That this person has the necessary business skills and the finacing to run a station.
 - c) That the person running the staion doesn't infringe upon some one elses T.V. operation (You set technical broadcast standards and frequencis for stations and inforce them and settle disputes as they arise.)
 - d) The staff of the FCC should consist mainly of engineers, technicians and support staff. There should be few lawyers and policy staff.

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

Look at how poorly the government runs PBS, the Post Office, and the IRS. If you guys honestly think you can do a better job of running a T.V. station , why aren't you their in the real world doing it? If you really think you can do a better job, with the above deregulation you shoul have an easy time getting a broadcast liceance. If you do a better job than the present broadcasters, you will be rich beyond your wildest dreams. But if you don't do a better job you will go broke.

What ever happened to the Constitution in this country of ours? What happened to the First Amendment? By regulation speach beyond a reasonanable point, you are violating the free speach of broadcasters and their coustomers. If I truly find something objectional an T.V., I could either:

- a) Quit watching the staion. This a free country and I can't be compelled to watch T.V.
- b) Hold a protest at the station at the station, write letters to the editor to the station or competing media.
- c) Boycott advertisers of the station. A station owner would have to be pretty rich and stupid to run a station that doesn't have any advertisers.
- d) Start my own station and out compete them on the open market.

Also what happened to the Fifth Amendment? You are telling station owner what they can and con not broadcast, but what are you paying them to follow your rules? I thought that the only way the government could tell me how to use my property was through just compensation or through due process of law. Your only concern should be to regulate broadcast frequencies to assure fair and free competition.

In short get out of regulating braodcast content and being the national T.V. nanny and let me keep me more of my own paycheck. Any parent who can't control what their children watch should own a T.V. or is a poor excuse of a parent. However bad a parent is they are still in a better position than the government to do the job.

Sincerly yours,
Charles Balogh

CC: FCCMAIL.SMTP("balogh@chemserv.umd.edu")

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SEP 13 1995

From: Chris Enochs <ENOCHSC@gunet.georgetown.edu>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 9/13/95 12:57pm
Subject: kids tv

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF SECRETARY

I'm often frustrated by simple solutions on "fixing" the relationship between children and television. The dynamic of that relationship is affected by many factors ? some of which can be monitored and controlled within a family, others can be as powerful and unmanageable as corporate interests or religious dogma.

What's often lost in the debate, I'm afraid, is any attempt to find methods of educating children to be better television viewers. By that I mean providing them with the tools to recognize quality and reward it with their viewership. Children (and often their parents) are functionally illiterate in the language of visual communication. They don't understand the language and methodology of the medium.

Where, as a society, we spend a great deal of time making certain that our children are language literate - that they understand the workings of written and spoken words, we don't invest a comparable amount of effort insuring that our children understand the workings of television. A children's book is simple in concept: a writer creates the words and an illustrator draws the pictures. Kids understand that process. They often mimic the process in play. What they don't understand is the motivation behind the programming they watch on television. While they may mimic the Power Rangers, few would take the time to understand how or why a program like that is made. If more did, I'm confident that they would continue to build a standard of quality leading them to search out better programming.

I know that, in their hearts, children would rather be learners than consumers. If parents would simply ask their kids why they like to watch certain shows and use the dialog to forward their children's understanding of the medium, we would be on our way to solving part of the problem.

The other parts of the problem are still daunting. We need programmers to create better, thought-provoking, inspiring, entertaining programs for kids. We need to reward that programming by encouraging our children to watch it. We need to know and understand what they are viewing, and view with them whenever possible. Finally, Nielsen family or no, we need to stop watching what we don't approve, not through government censorship, but family by family.

Please send me your findings on this topic. I'd be greatly interested in what others have to contribute.

Chris Enochs
4653-B 28th Road South
Arlington, VA 22206

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From: Melinda Melone <mmelone@CapAccess.org>
To: A16.A16(kidstv)
Date: 9/13/95 11:02pm
Subject: Proposed regulations

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20541

If possible, please send me a copy of the proposed regulations for children's television, either by e-mail or snail mail (address below). If this is not possible, are the regulations available anywhere in the DC public library system? I am a parent of two pre-schoolers and I am very interested in the debate over regulation of children's TV, but have not been able to find the actual proposals in our local library. Thank you,

Melinda Melone
645 Farragut Place NE
Washington, DC 20017

File # 16-1100-1000 rec'd
SEP 13 1995



Howard Kennedy
Vice President
General Manager

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DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

September 11, 1995

Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Secretary:

I believe the Children's Television Act is working in its current form.

At KMTV we air a weekly children's program, "Jean's Storytime", which has aired for over thirty years. The program airs during the school months (September - June) and is designed for the elementary age child. Each program tells a story with a positive moral message.

In the summer months, KMTV produces "Playground Champions" which teaches and promotes healthy competition, teamwork and physical skills.

KMTV understands the current definition of "educational and informational programming" and the aforementioned programs address the definition.

Additionally, we air children's specials on a regular basis during the year. I believe broadcasters are responding to the Act and the unquantified obligation in the current rules are working.

I hope you'll oppose further rules (MM Docket No. 93-48).

Sincerely,

Howard Kennedy

- cc: Chairman Reed Hundt
- Commissioner James Quello
- Commissioner Andrew Barrett
- Commissioner Susan Ness
- Commissioner Rachelle Chong

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