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Before the
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, D.C. 20554

In the Matter of	)	
Public Interest Obligations	)	**MM Docket No. 99-360**
of TV Broadcast Licensees	)	

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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

REPLY COMMENTS OF THE BENTON FOUNDATION

April 25, 2000

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The Benton Foundation ("Benton") respectfully submits reply comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission's ("Commission") or ("FCC") Notice of Inquiry, *In the Matter of Public Interest Obligations of TV Broadcast Licensees*, MM Docket No. 99-360 (rel. Dec. 20, 1999) ("NOI").

Since 1981, Benton has worked to realize the social benefits made possible by the public interest use of communications. Through its projects, the foundation seeks to shape the emerging communications environment in the public interest. Bridging the worlds of philanthropy, public policy and community action, Benton demonstrates and promotes the use of digital media to engage, equip and connect people to solve social problems. Benton's Communications Policy Project is a nonpartisan initiative to strengthen public interest efforts in shaping the emerging communications environment.

Benton has an endowment of approximately $14 million, the annual income from which is devoted to its own operating projects. Because of Benton's pioneering work, a number of foundations, corporations and government provide additional funding. In 2000, the Foundation operates with a staff of 30 and a budget of $6 million. Funders include: AOL Foundation, AT&T Foundation, Carnegie Corporation, Casey Family Programs, Annie E. Casey Foundation, Ford Foundation, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Joyce Foundation, W.K. Kellogg Foundation, Knight Foundation, Lucent Technologies, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Microsoft Corporation, NEC, National Endowment for the Arts, Open Society Institute, David and Lucile Packard Foundation, Rockefeller Foundation and The Rockefeller Brothers Fund.

In our comments, Benton presented the Commission with evidence that broadcasters are failing to air programming that is responsive to the needs of communities and urged the Commission to move to a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) based on a Viewers' Bill of Rights. Benton uses these Reply Comments to address the comments of those parties that offer conflicting views. We also note that the surge of public support for regulating digital broadcasters indicates that the time is right for the Commission to initiate a rulemaking in this matter, and we renew our request for prompt Commission action.

I. The Commission Should Not Rely on Marketplace Forces to Deliver Public Interest Programming

Some commenters (See e.g. National Association of Broadcasters ("NAB") at 10, Belo at 12) argue that marketplace forces will provide sufficient incentive for broadcasters to offer high quality, original, locally-oriented public interest programming. NAB goes on to argue that unless evidence demonstrates that existing public interest standards are inadequate, additional obligations cannot be justified (NAB at 9).

A. Broadcasters are Not Providing Local, Public Affairs Programming

In ***Market Conditions and Public Affairs Programming: Implications for Digital Television Policy***, Benton investigated whether marketplace conditions affect the provision of public affairs programming by analog television broadcasters. This examination of the relationship between market conditions and public affairs programming in the analog television environment can provide insights into broadcasters' programming practices that can then be applied to the issue of public interest programming obligations in the digital realm. The central research question was: Does competition encourage the airing of public affairs programming?

This study first compared levels of public affairs programming across a random sample of 24 markets. Next, this study examined a random sample of 112 commercial broadcast stations to determine whether, when accounting for station characteristics and market size and demographics, competitive conditions affect the quantity of public affairs programming provided. In order to conduct these analyses, the broadcast schedules for each station included in the station and/or market samples were analyzed for the two-week period beginning on January 17th and concluding on January 30th, 2000. This study analyzed local public affairs programming alone, as well as local and non-local public affairs programming combined.

The primary results of these analyses were as follows:

- Within the 24 markets studied, there was an average of 6.52 hours of local public affairs programming per market during the two-week time period, and an average of 1.1 hours per commercial station.
- 0.3 percent of the total commercial broadcast time within these markets was devoted to local public affairs programming.
- When local and non-local public affairs programming were analyzed together, the average hours of public affairs programming per market increased to 21.2 (3.59 hours per station) during the two-week time period.
- 1.06 percent of the total commercial broadcast time within the studied markets was devoted to local and non-local public affairs programming.
- Competitive conditions, market demographics, and station characteristics had no significant effect on the quantity of local public affairs programming provided by individual broadcast stations.
- Competitive conditions were significantly related to the provision of local and non-local public affairs programming combined. Specifically, there was a significant positive relationship between the number of commercial broadcast stations in a market and the amount of public affairs programming that a station provides. The moderate level of explained variation (less than 25 percent), however, suggests that public affairs programming decisions are quite resistant to market conditions.

Overall, the results of this study suggest that broadcasters generally devote a very small fraction of their broadcast time to public affairs programming, and that marketplace incentives do not effectively motivate the provision of such programming, particularly in terms of locally produced public affairs programming.

The results of this study are similar to the 1998 Media Access Project and Benton Foundation report, ***What's Local about Local Broadcasting***, that surveyed stations in selected markets regarding the amount of local public affairs programming aired weekly. The survey found that, in the five markets examined (Chicago, IL; Phoenix, AZ; Nashville, TN; Spokane, WA; and Bangor, ME), 40 commercial broadcasters provided 13,250 total hours of programming – just 0.35% (46.5 hours) were devoted to local public affairs over a two-week period. Moreover, the survey found that 35% of the stations provided no local news, and 25% offered neither local public affairs programming nor local news.

B. Broadcasters are Not Addressing Community Issues in Local Newscasts

Although broadcasters may argue that local public affairs is covered in extended news programming, the evidence does not bear them out. In November 1999, the Project for Excellence in Journalism ("Project for Excellence") released a study on local television newscasts. After examining the top-rated half hour news in 19 cities during a February sweeps week and a week in April that was not part of sweeps, the Project for Excellence rated more than 80% of stations with "D" or "F" grades for investigative stories, special series or tough, high-quality interviews. The study found that even coverage of breaking news, a staple of local TV that requires less effort than investigative reports, is dropping on local TV newscasts. Out-of-town feeds, however, are on the rise: up 25% from 1998. The Project on Excellence also found that local TV news is one-sided and reactive: 9 out of 10 stories come from the police scanner or a planned news event. While covering controversial issues, local TV news is most likely (55% of the time) to provide just one point of view.

In addition to the Project for Excellence study, a March 1998 study by the Kaiser Family Foundation and the Center for Media and Public Affairs documents similar findings about local news coverage. ***Assessing Local Television News Coverage of Health Issues*** reports that crime is the most common topic of local newscasts. In a typical 30-minute newscast, commercials (8 minutes), crime (4 minutes), and sports (4 minutes) make up more than half the air time, the study found. All other topics averaged one minute or less. The five most common story topics in local news are crime (20 percent), weather (11 percent), accidents and disasters (9 percent), human interest stories (7 percent) and health stories (7 percent), with all other topics ranking below the top five.

Even at the network level, coverage of important political events is dwindling as broadcasters have abdicated to cable networks their role as the dominant source for political news. "We have a responsibility beyond delivering stockholder value," said CBS Evening News Managing Editor and Anchor Dan Rather. "In some ways, we have abrogated that civic trust."[1] A 1997 study by the Committee of Concerned Journalists, ***Changing Definitions of News***, found that prime time network news magazines, which have replaced documentaries, have all but abandoned covering traditional topics such as government, social welfare, education and economics in favor of lifestyle and "news-you-can-use." People stories, lifestyle/behavior, news you can use and celebrity stories made up 55% of the total and crime and justice stories were 23%. Only 8% of prime time news

[1] Marks, Peter. "Networks Cede Political Coverage to Cable." New York Times, April 7, 2000.

magazines cover education, economics, foreign affairs, the military, national security, politics or social welfare.

Many commenters have demonstrated that the Commission cannot rely on the market to ensure that communities are well-served. The market's failure is demonstrated by submissions in our comments concerning local public affairs programming, the United States Catholic Conference's at 4-8 (denial of access for religious programming); League of United Latin American Citizens ("LULAC") on programming aimed at Latinos (at 2-4); and Michigan Consumer Federation (at 5) no local news.

These submissions undermine the claims by several broadcasters that the industry is already providing an ample amount of public service (See e.g. CBS at 7-8 citing NAB study; Belo at 7 citing its own study, National Minority Television at 2, NAB at 9).

C. Broadcasters' Community Service Claims Are Suspect

Since the filing date, NAB has issued a new survey, ***Bringing Community Service Home***, which claims local radio and television stations contributed $8.1 billion nationwide to community service during a 12-month period in 1998-99.

The breakdown of the $8.1 billion is categorized as follows:

Projected value of public service announcement (PSA) airtime:	$5.6 billion
Raising Funds for Charity:	$2.3 billion
Raising Funds for Crisis Relief:	$187 million

For television broadcasters, the community public service commitment was less than $3 billion:

Projected value of public service announcement (PSA) airtime:	$1.8 billion
Raising Funds for Charity:	$934 million
Raising Funds for Crisis Relief:	unspecified

The $934 million for charity relief and the unspecified total for crisis relief, however, is not monies paid by broadcasters for theses causes, but funds offered by their viewers. Broadcasters claiming the charity of their viewers is a stretch of any reasonable definition of community service. Even if broadcasters had provided this charity money themselves, their obligations as corporate citizens is distinct from their obligation to serve the public by providing programming that caters to their community. Thus, donations of money to different charities does not exempt them from other public interest obligations.

Even NAB's $1.8 billion estimate for donated PSA time may be inflated. To project the value of PSA airtime donated, the NAB multiplies the run-of-station rate by the average (or median) number of PSAs that broadcasters air. NAB uses the run-of-station price to estimate the value of donated air-time and not the price of the ad time when the PSAs actually ran. The run-of-station rate is the price an advertiser pays per ad to run many ads throughout all broadcasting times--both prime time hours and non-prime time hours. Thus, the run-of-station rate is an average of prime time and non-prime time rates. Most PSAs are run in non-prime-time hours where the rate is lower.

In 1997 the American Association of Advertising Agencies and Association of National Advertisers report, ***1996 Television Commercial Monitoring Report***, showed that non-program material accounted for one-fourth to one-third of all network TV time. In the proceeding year, prime time commercial minutes -- which include PSAs, promos and local and network commercials--on the networks and stations increased by an average of 31 seconds per hour to an all-time high across all networks in November 1996. But PSAs account for only a fraction of the overall commercial time in prime time. The study reveals that in November 1996, UPN aired no prime time PSAs; Fox -- 2 seconds per prime time hour; CBS -- 3 seconds; WB -- 6 seconds; ABC -- 9 seconds, and NBC -- 11 seconds. Meanwhile, the networks aired between 3:44 and 4:35 of promos per prime time hour, between 8:12 and 9:05 of network commercials and between 2:12 and 2:46 of local commercials.

The lack of prime time PSAs is nothing new, but a significant shift has occurred in the overall time dedicated to commercials and promos in prime time. Since November 1991 (the first year data is available on promos), total commercial time has increased at ABC from 9 minutes to 11:26, at CBS from 9:10 to 10:29, at NBC from 9:57 to 10:33, and at Fox from 11:03 to 11:40. Promo time increased at NBC from 3:47 to 4:35, at Fox from 3:49 to 4:25, and at CBS from 4:17 to 4:21. ABC's promo time decreased from 3:50 to 3:44.

According to the advertising trade groups' latest "clutter" report issued in March 2000, CBS set aside, on average, just one second per hour for PSAs in November 1999. Put another way, that's a little more than one 15-second spot per week. NBC and Fox are not much better: NBC offered just three seconds per hour; Fox offered four.

II. Scarcity is Even More Applicable Now in Light of the Unprecedented Amount of Concentration in the Broadcast Industry and the Corresponding Decrease in Independent Voices on the Airwaves.

Some commenters contend that the scarcity rationale set forth in *Red Lion v. FCC* justifying the regulation of broadcasting is suspect (See, e.g., Comments of CBS at 19, Belo at 15). These parties maintain that because the underlying legal justification for the Commission's constitutional authority to regulate broadcasters is precarious, the Commission should tread lightly in adopting any additional or enhanced public interest obligations. A few commenters go so far as to claim that *Red Lion* is no longer good law (See, e.g., Comments of Media Institute). These parties argue that because *Red Lion* and the scarcity doctrine it embodies are unrelated to broadcast regulation any public interest obligations adopted by the Commission for digital broadcasters are unfounded and illegal. The NAB goes so far as to argue "the vast increase in the number and variety of non-broadcast outlets makes the idea of 'scarcity' of media voices seem almost quaint" (NAB at 13).

In recent months mergers and acquisitions have begun the process of creating behemoth corporations – America Online/Time Warner, Viacom/CBS (the largest television station ownership group) – that seem to fall into a trend. Additional examples are Walt Disney/ Capital Cities/ABC, CBS/Infinity Broadcasting/King World, AT&T/TCI/MediaOne, and Clear Channel/AMFM/SFX Entertainment.

At the same time, these same companies are urging the Commission to loosen ownership caps intended to preserve a robust marketplace of ideas. In September 1999, executives from some of the information industries' largest corporations – Viacom, CBS, AT&T and MediaOne – asked the government to loosen rules so that mergers would be approved without selling off assets.

The intent of the decades-old rules is to insure that there are enough different voices, opinions and news gathers to keep citizens informed. Corporations are now arguing that these rules are arcane and do not apply in a "broadband Internet world." "The government should now take a look at whether the original rationale of the rule is still valid – namely, the ability to bottleneck programming," said James Cicconi, general counsel and head of government relations for AT&T.[2]

In a recent New York Times article,[3] Stuart Elliot offered a perspective on these mega-mergers from the world of advertising, raising a new economic rationale for opposing media concentration and for preserving public interest obligations. The mergers are creating media and entertainment conglomerates that combine disparate properties to offer marketers additional opportunities to buy commercial time and advertising space in "cross-media packages," as they are coming to be known. From Web sites, to TV and radio networks and stations, to print media, to entertainment properties like film studios, sports teams and TV program syndicators, cross-promotional campaigns are becoming increasingly popular as a way for these corporations to increase revenues.

"I see only more consolidation, which clearly has pros and cons for advertising agencies," said one New York media director. "To the degree you want to make multimedia deals, there's more to play with. But to the degree there's less competition, and higher pricing, it's not a pretty thing."

Another advertising executive adds: "If you buy all the pieces of a pie, the cost should be less. But they believe the value of the whole pie is so much greater than the individual pieces." Media-entertainment conglomerates are becoming "a hundred miles deep" in key markets, offering a host of channels to reach consumers. Those customers are surrounded by different points of contact: the radio or TV as they prepare for and get to work,

[2] Labaton, Stephen. Many Media Voices of a Few Merged Masters. New York Times, 9/12/99.
[3] Elliot, Stuart. Advertising: Madison Avenue Considers the Benefits and Drawbacks of Media Megadeals. New York Times, 3/14/2000.

billboards along the way, on the Internet as people surf instead of working, in newspaper ads as they take a coffee break, in magazines in the restroom and so forth, ad nausea.

For example, after its merger with Times Mirror is complete, the Tribune Company, the 4th-largest television ownership group, will be the largest multimedia company in four of the five most populous states: California, New York, Illinois and Florida. In the fifth, Texas, it will own two major-market TV stations: KDAF-TV in Dallas and KHWB-TV in Houston.

Disney, the 6th-largest television station group, is another prime example with ESPN, a cable network which is being expanded to magazine, radio, the Internet and bars. "The idea is to take the strongest brands the company has and surround each with multimedia ventures," said an executive in an interactive media service agency.

"The same big [media] players are every bit as keen on swallowing the Internet as they have the traditional media," said New York University's Mark Crispin Miller. "The consensus is that the Internet is getting less diverse and more homogenized as it becomes more commercial."

What does the consolidated media world look like?

Television

- The number of TV stations has grown in the last 50 years – from 96 to over 1200, but local news coverage and public affairs are not their strength as noted in the Benton studies above.
- The largest 25 TV station group owners now control nearly 42% of the country's commercial TV stations, up from 38.6% a year ago.[4]
- Pending merger approval, the largest ownership group, Paramount/CBS, will own 35 stations reaching nearly 48% of viewing households. The parent company will own, in addition to these stations, CBS (the most-watched television network) and UPN TV network; programming syndicators in radio and TV; 178 radio stations; outdoor advertising firms TDI Worldwide and Outdoor Systems; cable channels including MTV, VH-1, Nickelodeon, Showtime, Comedy Central (with Time Warner), TNN, the Nashville Network, Home Team Sports, and Country Music Television; online interest including CBS.com, CBSMarketWatch.com, MTVi, Imagine Radio, iWon.com, Sportsline.com, Red Rocket, SonicNet.com, and a major stake of Brill Media's contentville.com; Paramount Pictures; Simon & Schuster; Blockbuster; and more than 1,000 movie screens.[5]
- The 5th-largest station group, NBC, has a 32.5% ownership stake in the 3rd-largest ownership group, Paxson Communications, with an option to acquire up to 49%. Paxson stations are already providing reruns of NBC programming.

Radio

[4] Rathbun, Elizabeth. Down in Deregulation Dumps. Broadcasting and Cable, April 10, 2000, p.73.
[5] Five of the top six television station ownership groups have similar multimedia holdings.

- In the four years since the Telecommunications Act of 1996 passed, the ownership of 7,839 radio stations has changed hands, with sales prices totaling $67.9 billion, according to BIA Financial Network.
- With Clear Channel Communications Inc.'s purchace of AMFM, Clear Channel and Infinity Broadcasting Corp., the radio subsidiary of CBS Corp., combined will have more than half the radio revenue in many of the nation's biggest markets, including New York, Philadelphia, Detroit and St. Louis, according to figures from BIA Financial Network
- Metro Networks, a Houston-based company, supplies traffic, weather and sports reports to 1,700 radio stations and has lately become a huge presence in news – often supplying coverage to many stations within the same market. In New York, for example, Metro works for 41 stations.

Cable

- Of the top 20 cable networks, ranked by number of subscribers, eight are owned by four of the largest television station ownership groups and another six are owned by the two largest cable operators.
- The promise of diversity on cable has gone unfilled. Mainly because of funding constraints, 18% of public access, education and government channels go unused, says former PBS and NBC News President Larry Grossman.

Newspapers

- 50 years ago, there were 2,200 daily newspapers; now there are about 1,500 and most cities only have one.

Far from "quaint," these trends in media ownership show that despite any increase in the number and variety of non-broadcast outlets makes, the idea of scarcity of media voices is as powerful today as the day of the *Red Lion* decision.

III. No Broadcaster Should Be Excluded From Obligations to Be Responsive To Their Community

Benton is a strong supporter of noncommercial, public television and recognizes that public broadcasters are often the primary source of children's educational programming in many communities. Public television, it would seem, is rich in local resources. Yet, paradoxically, public television has built much of its reputation as a national, rather than as a local, institution. The majority of public television stations produce little or no local programming. The number of public television stations producing their own local programming is low (at the last count by Current in 1998, out of 179 licensees, less than 20 had a local nightly news show).

Benton and other commenters (See e.g. PBTV at 26) have urged the Commission to require broadcasters to ascertain and to provide programming that is responsive to the needs of the community. In no way should public broadcasters be exempt from this commitment to localism.

IV. The Public Supports a NPRM

Since Benton filed comments last month, the public has shown a growing interest in this matter and has sent letters of support (See Appendix A). This support is consistent with previous public opinion research.

In 1999, the Benton Foundation released national survey data that found the following:

- Americans are in favor of asking television broadcasters to do more in return for the free use of public airwaves. The public would like to see more educational programming for both children and adults, a reduction in the number of commercials during children's TV shows, and financial support from broadcasters to support public television and noncommercial programming.
- The public has little understanding of what digital TV will mean for them and lacks knowledge about basic industry facts. A near majority have not heard anything about digital television and those who have heard about digital TV believe that it means little more than a better picture. The great majority of Americans (71 percent) do not know that broadcasters get free access to the airwaves.
- The public strongly support individual proposals to require broadcasters to do more in return for the free use of new public airwaves for digital television. They give their strongest support to proposals that call on broadcasters to support public education and educational programming and to reduce the number of commercials during children's television shows.
- Once people learn that the airwaves are currently given to broadcasters for free, there is considerable support for charging broadcasters for additional airwaves they may need to create new digital channels.
- The public is especially responsive to a specific proposal to require commercial broadcasters to pay 5 percent of their revenues into a fund for public broadcasting to provide more educational and noncommercial programming.
- When discussed in the context of continuing to give broadcasters free use of additional airwaves, there is near unanimous support for broadcasters meeting certain public obligations like more children's education programming and more local programming. Only seven percent are opposed.
- The public is also overwhelmingly supportive of requiring broadcasters to follow existing law to require three hours of children's educational programming on any new channels they may create.

The most powerful communication medium of the 20th Century is going through a radical transformation. As television broadcasting transitions into the Digital Age, we have a critical opportunity to unlock its educational, cultural, and civic potential. Since the marketplace cannot alone serve the diverse needs of America's people, we must reassert the principles of society and apply them to the new world of digital television. If advanced television is to serve America as a people and not just as a market, then we must seize this critical time to harness television's full potential to serve the public good. What's needed is a strong confirmation from the Commission: the airwaves belong to the public—thus the rights of viewers, listeners, information providers and producers are paramount.

Digital television will serve democracy in the years to come as long as the public secures a guarantee from station owners to serve our diverse educational, cultural and civic needs.

Respectfully submitted,

Anthony G. Wilhelm, Ph.D.
Program Director
Communications Policy and Practice
Benton Foundation
202-638-5770
tony@benton.org

Kevin Taglang
Senior Telecommunications Policy Analyst
Communications Policy and Practice
Benton Foundation
847-733-1375
kevint@benton.org

Appendix A:

Comments From the Public in Support of an NPRM

Anderson, Rachel

From: Mark Nordstrom [nordstr@bgnet.bgsu.edu]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 11:03 AM
To: rachel
Subject: MM Docket No. 99-360

Broadcast television does next to nothing to serve local communities. Local news, some public service announcements and occaisional promotion of a fund raising effort. Local production just does not exist, except for news (maybe a parade once a year, if then). You learn very little about a community through your television. Actual locally-produced entertainment programming is very badly needed. Digital stations may end up providing information services via hand-held phones or other receivers. Access to local information should be included. A television station is little better than a car dealership in service to its community. It is mainly a conduit for products coming from outide the community. "Inflexible" regulation has been avoided in the past and the result has been broadcasters find ways to flex around the rules and the communities have lost local service in the bargain. Stations should be required to produce a minimum amount of local, entertainment programming per day. !
It should employ local people in portraying the local area. That is needed. A station that serves an entire market should be fully capable of supporting that, in addition to the news programming and other not-worth-mentioning programming they do now.

Anderson, Rachel

From: Theresa Williamson [theresawilliamson@yahoo.com]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 11:03 AM
To: rachel
Subject: MM Docket No. 99-360

Now is the time to define the basic agreement
between local television stations and the communities they are licensed to serve. Stations using public airwaves should be required to provide programs that support the rebuilding and strengthening of civic society. Though markets are believed to be essential to a free society, not all consequences of market decisions are supportive of democratic health. When TV viewers see increasingly sensationalistic local news coverage (which is shown as a result of market competition), they are, in effect, numbed into negative beliefs about society's direction and apathy. Those striving to improve society don't get coverage, and increasingly find it hard to obtain support from an apathetic public uninformed of positive possibilities.
Please, let's have this debate now and not leave it for later.

Anderson, Rachel

From: Peter Demma [mohchang@pacbell.net]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 11:03 AM
To: rachel
Subject: MM Docket No. 99-360

Please don't say, "Let them eat cake." There is a whole growing bunch of us U.S. citizens who are quite financially embarassed. Blocking access to our intra-communicating is like shooting yourself in the foot.

Anderson, Rachel

From: William Canna [canncrnk@bellatlantic.net]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 11:02 AM
To: rachel
Subject: MM Docket No. 99-360

If advanced television is to serve America as a people and not just as a market, we, the American people, must seize this critical time to harness television's full potential to serve the public good. The airwaves belong to the American people. Our rights as viewers, listeners, information providers and producers are paramount. Digital television will serve democracy in the years to come as long as the public secures a guarantee from station owners to serve our diverse educational, cultural and civic needs. This message is to let the Federal Communications Commission know to begin rulemaking on the public interest obligations of digital broadcasters.

Anderson, Rachel

From: J. Wright [omelight@juno.com]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 11:02 AM
To: rachel
Subject: MM Docket No. 99-360

One way that digital television will serve democracy in the years to come will be to make sure that public BROADCASTING can actually make the transition to digital.

Anderson, Rachel

From: Sarah Crnkovic [canncrnk@bellatlantic.net]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 11:02 AM
To: rachel
Subject: MM Docket No. 99-360

If advanced television is to serve America as a people and not just as a market, we, the American people, must seize this critical time to harness television's full potential to serve the public good. The airwaves belong to the American people. Our rights as viewers, listeners, information providers and producers are paramount. Digital television will serve democracy in the years to come as long as the public secures a guarantee from station owners to serve our diverse educational, cultural and civic needs. This message is to let the Federal Communications Commission know to begin rulemaking on the public interest obligations of digital broadcasters.

Anderson, Rachel

From: Dr. Janet Poley [jpoley@unl.edu]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 11:02 AM
To: rachel
Subject: MM Docket No. 99-360

We need a completely open and honest rulemaking. We need advance notice of hearings. We need no more media hype and controlled communication in this area. We need a big change in how we are going about "photo-op - marketing hype." It's bad for the country.

Anderson, Rachel

From: ralph kranz [rkranz@library.utah.edu]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 11:02 AM
To: rachel
Subject: MM Docket No. 99-360

i, the user of dbs, cable and broadcast channels, viewing wellover 42 hrs of tv/week & watching the most "b" movies and trash available (thank god, for dbs) find it most digusting and hypocritcal for abc, nbc, abc etc to whine over their "public interest" obligations which they have so far over the last 50 yrs almost totally ignored - i, one of the biggest purveyors of tv trash, STRONGLY URGE YOU TO FORCE THEM TO PROVIDE FREE CANDIDATE TIME FOR ELECTION INFO -- they are making a mint & yet refuse to do something that could revolutionize politics & finally start removing the "i will buy an office" that most of us see taken for granted by rich politicians and want to be's - i strongly believe the use of a spectrum is a priviledge that they MUST PAY THROUGH THE NOSE FOR ONE WAY OR ANOTHER; & the way i strongly support is an increase 10 fold/100 fold of SPECIFICIALLY what they must provide for as their "public interest obligation" -- i also totally support forcing them to drastica!
lly increase their "local coverage", what we get now is laughable - this would be one of the few ways to fight the control of news/info outlets by huge national and international corporations; force them to still ADEQUATELY address local & state issues

the "networks" have gotten away with doing nothing for the public for 50 yrs
- this is the time to say "no"; either pay billions for this spectrum & to
allow others to take care of the public's interest OR FORCE THEM TO DO SO

thank you

Anderson, Rachel

From: Montague Kern [mkern@scils.rutgers.edu]
Sent: Monday, April 24, 2000 11:02 AM
To: rachel
Subject: MM Docket No. 99-360

FCC Commissioner William Kennard has been taking many courageous positions in recent weeks, relating to a number of issues, including low power radio. We can only be grateful that he his voice is frequently heard over the cacophony this primary season representing the public interest.

I would like to encourage him to keep it: hold a rule-making hearing on digital television, which will be a key voice of democracy in the critical years ahead. Democracy requires diverse and competing voices.

Thank you.

Montague Kern
Associate Professor,
School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, Rutgers University