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February 28, 2002

To: MR. William Caton
Secretary Federal communications Commission.

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From: Richard J. Schefdore
Member of The National Federation of the Blind
Address: 434 Chapin
Toledo Ohio 43609.

Subject: Pending Actions on Described T.V.
FCC Docket number: 99-339

Dear Mr. Caton,

As a totally blind individual, I am writing to you today to express some of my personal thoughts on the current described T.V. deliberations and actions.

First and most importantly I ask the FCC to make a clear and objective distinction, on the subject of described T.V, for America's Blind individuals.
The primary polar issue as I see it is: what information is really necessary and needed versus what information is merely nice to have solely for it's entertainment value.

I do not object to the current methodology in today's Television programming, except for one issue. That is, that currently I can not get important civic information, that at times is crucial to my very safety.
Thus to this particular end, descriptive T.V. would obviously be a necessary informational source for me, and other blind individuals.
While I would not mind voluntary secondary channel descriptive T.V. for entertainment purposes, I strongly feel that it should not be a legally mandated action by the FCC.
Described T.V. quite simply, does not rise to the point of a necessity!

Moreover, I have a concern that if description T.V. is enforced on the Television industry. This action may in fact block out important information that is crawling across the bottom of the screen. Because of the television show preempting the text information.

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Consequently defeating the whole purpose of getting information that has a practical value in my awareness of the surrounding environment! Thus from this perspective, I would be no better off than if descriptive T.V. had never been implemented and enforced by the FCC.

My perspective on described T.B. echoes the thoughts of the National Federation of the Blind's expectancies of the FCC on this issue.

Our position is simple and straight forward: "We want the FCC to compel the industry to create a system by which all words printed to the screen or crawled across the bottom are simultaneously voiced."

A machine called a character generator, on a second channel, could easily accomplish this procedure.

Always an important consideration in business, is that from a financial standpoint: we feel that after the initial investment of implementing descript T.V. solely for the purpose of text information, the future costs will be more or less neutral for the entertainment industry. However I suspect that any action past this point, directed towards description T.V. would be a perpetual expense that the industry does not need to incur. Moreover in my opinion, beyond text information described T.V. merely for it's entertainment value, would be a feature that many blind American's could really care less about!

I urge you not to make descript T.V. a compulsory action, beyond the point of a synthesized voice that is activated when printed text information appears on the screen.

At this particular point in time, it appears to me that the wrong issue is being prioritized. Entertainment value simply is not what is most important in any practical and meaningful way.

I strongly support the position of The National petition of Broadcasters, the National Telecommunications Association, and The national Motion Picture Association of America. To postpone the implementation of the order to require fifty hours of audio description of prime time video programming per quarter. Until the pending court appeal is resolved.

Respectfully Yours,

Richard J. Schefdore