

Dear FCC:

I am writing in support of the FCC proposed rules for descriptive video MM Docket No.99-339. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for considering the request of blind people, nationwide, to have equal access to the information presented on television via audio-description. For many years, I have enjoyed the descriptive videos offered by WGBH's Descriptive Video Service. In addition, I was pleased to have my viewing pleasure expanded by the Public Broadcasting Service's audio described offerings. In fact, I even purchased a television and VCR in order to be able to access audio described programming.

Now it is time for me to speak both for myself and for other blind people I know who may not be able to provide comments in a timely fashion. Despite the National Federation of the Blind's claims to the contrary, blind people need and *DO WANT audio-described programming which extends beyond news programming and emergency information. At first, I, like members of the NFB, wondered what all the fuss was about, but as I have watched more videos, and especially as I have watched audio-described programs I would never have considered watching independently, I have begun to realize just how much I used to miss. Perhaps Federationists find it threatening to consider that they may be missing vital information in television shows. I, however, do not find such an admission distasteful. I want to learn about the sighted world as much as I hope that sighted people want to learn about my lived experiences.

In order for blind people to be active, informed, and contributing citizens in this country, we must be as aware as possible of the sighted world. Whether some blind people want to admit it, we do miss important parts of that sighted world because we cannot always follow television programs independently.

Should I, as a graduate student teaching English, have to rely on my students to tell me about television programs about which they write in their papers for my composition class? Or shouldn't I, instead, be completely able to watch these programs independently--coming away from them with a full grasp of the visual aspects. Only with such a total understanding can I hope to engage students in conversations to enable them to think critically about what they watch on television.

Should I have to call a friend on the telephone during a program, as I have done in the past, to ask for audio descriptions of moments in the show without dialogue? Or should I just have to wait until I can find someone who watched the program and can tell me how the mystery was solved in the end, or how a character was injured Exactly?

Thank you for taking the time to consider my questions and concerns with care. Though I acknowledge the industry's concerns about expense, aren't such expenses a small price to pay to enable blind folks to become more culturally literate and independent? Notice, in my example above, that my having better access to information in television shows would make me a more effective teacher. Being an effective teacher will certainly increase my chances of becoming gainfully employed as a professor. Then, I'll be more than happy to spend some of my earnings to pay for cable and other similar services from the media which will be accessible and enjoyable to me.

Thank you for your time.
Sincerely,
Jennifer Sutton
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