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March 14, 2000

Magalie Roman Salas
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, S.W., TW-A325
Washington, D.C. 20554

RE: COMMENTS ON NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING
IN THE MATTER OF VIDEO DESCRIPTION OF VIDEO PROGRAMMING

MM Docket No. 99-339

Dear Ms. Salas:

As a concerned citizen of the United States who happens to be blind, I welcome this opportunity to express my views on the above Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM). The NPRM proposes to mandate use of audio description of visual images by television networks and stations using the Secondary Audio Programming (SAP) channel. While I, as a blind person, have benefited from the use of audio description for a few movies, and while I believe that continued research and development to improve this technology is desirable, I strongly oppose the imposition of audio description as a federal mandate.

To put it another way, audio description of material that is purely recreational in nature is not all that essential to my existence as a person who happens to be blind. Of greater importance to me is the ability to get at emergency news and weather information that is often scrolled across the television screen without any corresponding verbal information, the ability to learn the identities of the "talking heads" in local and national news broadcasts, and the ability to know the vital phone numbers that are displayed on the screen. The video description contemplated in the above NPRM will not provide any meaningful help in this regard.

This may lead you to conclude that I favor a mandate for audio description of essential and/or emergency information. I certainly do not favor a federal mandate for audio description of material that is purely entertainment. However, I might favor an FCC mandate requiring the major networks to provide verbal information about critical data that, today, is only available visually. However, that is as far as I would take it.

Again, thank you for this opportunity to comment on the NPRM requiring major networks to include audio description. I oppose the NPRM in its present form.

Yours sincerely,

Curtis Chong