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March 16, 2000

Magalie Roman Salas
Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW, TW-A325
Washington, DC 20554

RE: MM Docket No. 99-339

Dear Ms. Salas:

I am writing to support the position of the National Federation of the Blind regarding audio descriptions of visual images on television for blind people. The letter sent to you by James Gashel expresses very well the complexities with this issue and the real needs of the blind. Most entertainment featured on television is expressed both verbally and visually. The verbal and visual reinforce one another. When this is not the case, a little imagination will often take care of filling in the gaps.

When printed letters or numbers are used to save time and are not verbalized, this is a different story. This is when audio descriptions to explain part of what is on the television screen really matters, because there is no way to know a name, a phone number, or a brand of merchandise if it is not announced. If the FCC wants to get into this area, then it should address the real problem, not the periphery.

I will save you the time of re-reading the things in James Gashel's letter. He covered the matter well. Please consider the real needs of the blind when you make rules regarding Secondary Audio Programming (SAP).

Very truly yours,

Ramona Walhof

Ramona Walhof

RW/tmo

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