

March 22, 2000

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

Dear Ms. Salas:

RE: Comments on NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING in the matter of video description of video programming

MM Docket No. 99-339

Thank you for the opportunity to submit comments regarding the Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) concerning "descriptive video". I serve as the president of the National Federation of the Blind of Colorado, the largest membership organization of blind people in this state. The discussions around "descriptive video" in our state meetings and chapter meetings have been most interesting.

First of all, let me state that I am speaking on behalf of myself and also the membership of our state NFB affiliate. The mandated video description proposed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), is no doubt presented in a spirit of helpfulness. If I may, let me share with you the comments of our members regarding such mandatory description.

It is interesting to know that someone in a television show might be wearing a spectacular costume. However, it is essential (and I emphasize the word essential) to know that there is an impending tornado about to strike the area in which you live. "Essential" and "interesting" are two entirely different words with two entirely different meanings. At the present time, when blind people watch television, and we do watch television, we may hear a beeping tone which indicates a weather warning. However, we have no idea what that tone means. It may mean that your television needs repair, or it may mean something much more vital to your safety.

Perhaps a blind person is an avid sports fan, and many of us are avid sports fans. We may be watching a local newscast and sports figures may be interviewed but not identified. For the average sports fan, an audio indicator of who that sports figure is might be far more interesting than whether an actor may be wearing a fantastic costume.

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These are very simple examples of why we are opposed to mandatory video descriptions in standard network programming through the use of secondary audio programming (SAP). It is far more important that we receive information such as

weather alerts, information regarding telephone numbers to access products we might like to purchase which are presently flashed on the screen, and local news information which may be quickly flashed across the screen.

We urge you, in your rule making, to step back and take a look at your proposals. First of all, please bring to the blind population of our country the vital information we need. We enjoy some descriptive video, or at least some of us do. Some of us do not. Choice in the matter is what is really important. Please review the resolution passed by the National Federation of the Blind convention which has been supplied to you by James Gashel, our director of governmental affairs. This resolution resoundingly dismisses the use of descriptive video as you have proposed.

Thank you for considering these comments which I have presented on behalf of the National Federation of the Blind of Colorado. Descriptive video is of interest to some blind people, and they would have a personal choice, whether to use it or not. But, as it has been very clearly stated, the announcement of important information as I have outlined above is certainly the priority of members of the National Federation of the Blind.

Diane McGeorge,

President, National Federation of the Blind of Colorado  
Board Member, National Federation of the Blind