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

RE: Comments of Notice of Proposed Rulemaking in the matter of video  
description of video programming  
MM Docket No. 99-339

My comments are made with two perspectives in mind. I am a blind person who has been watching and enjoying television since I was a child. In addition, I am employed as coordinator of a project that teaches senior citizens who are new to being blind how to keep their independence.

My favorite shows have always been comedies and dramas. For the most part, they are easy to follow; and, for the few times when the dialogue is not sufficient I can usually find someone who has watched the show to gain the information. I have never thought it the responsibility of the government to mandate that I not be inconvenienced with my entertainment. The claim that video description is comparable to captioning for the deaf has no basis. I can relate the plots of most shows with no help from another viewer. I could not do so accurately without dialogue. To prove this point, try watching a show, say a comedy, with the sound turned completely down. Then watch the same show next week with your back to the television. See which makes more sense.

There is, however, an area where the government could be helpful with access. I know that when I hear a series of beeps some sort of weather warning is being flashed across the screen. If there is a way for this information to be provided it would be far more essential than whether my favorite star is scowling or grinning.

The seniors with whom I work are not enamoured with fancy technology. They, in fact, are just discovering that they can still dial a phone. They will not bother with the SAP feature on their television. They would also find the describer's voice disconcerting and confusing. We know this because we have demonstrated descriptive movies to many seniors and I know that few of them bother to use such movies.

In closing, I hope that the final rule will reflect common sense. While you might encourage networks to experiment with video description we are a long way from needing it mandated. Instead, take this opportunity to do something worthwhile. Help us gain access to weather warnings and other vital news information.

Thank you.

Judy Sanders

