

I am a legally blind person (i.e., less than 10% of normal vision) and have used audio description of live theater performances and TV programs on PBS.

Such description has been useful and has added to my understanding of the play or program. It has been nice, but not essential. It in no way compares to the need of a deaf person to have speech translated into sign language.

I can easily get along without knowing the expression on an actor's face or his cloths in a sit-com. It is nice to know, but it is not essential to my understanding of the plot.

However, what can be absolutely essential is the text displayed on the screen.

This occurs with weather warnings, newscasts, interviews, and foreign language segments with subtitles. I can see the action on the screen, but not read the text. In the case of weather warnings, that can be a matter of life or death rather just enhancing understanding of a program.

The current proposal addresses the very minor issue of network programming of sit-coms and dramas. It does nothing to deal with the real need for speaking text on the screen. It is a band-aid that will cover up the far more important need.

I urge you to rework the current proposal to cover weather warnings, newscasts, interviews in which the speaker is identified only by text on the screen, and foreign language segments in which translation is presented only by subtitles. Deal with the real problem, not a sighted person's idea of the problem.

Although the results of the current proposal would be useful in a minor way, I fear that would be the end of it. TV people would think they had taken care of blind people when nothing could be further from the truth.