



FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

January 17, 2001

The Honorable John McCain  
Commerce Committee  
United States Senate  
508 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Joseph I. Lieberman  
Governmental Affairs Committee  
United States Senate  
706 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert C. Byrd  
Appropriations Committee  
United States Senate  
311 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Sam Brownback  
Commerce Committee  
United States Senate  
303 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators:

The attached Report to Congress responds to your letter of May 25, 2000 in which you expressed concern about the declining standards of broadcast television. You noted that "the time has come for the Commission to engage in a broad reexamination of the public interest standard, and the license renewal process, to determine if in fact the broadcasters are serving 'the public interest, convenience, and necessity.'" You asked that the Commission use its pending *Notice of Inquiry* on the public interest obligations of television broadcasters to study these issues and "to comment on the advisability of resurrecting an industry-adopted code of conduct to protect against further erosion of the broadcasting standards and to provide a broader platform for self-regulation."

Based on the extensive record in this proceeding and the views expressed at the Commission's October *en banc* hearing on the public interest obligations of television broadcasters, the enclosed Report is designed to provide a broad examination of television broadcasters' public interest obligations and guide your thinking in this area. This Report attempts to distill a number of broad principles for broadcasters that, if followed, would go a long way toward ensuring that they serve the public interest. It identifies eleven major principles of how broadcasters can fulfill their statutory duty to serve the public interest. Under each of these broad principles, the Report identifies various specific ways that broadcasters can satisfy the public interest goal behind the principle. Some of these principles reiterate existing Commission requirements. Others are recommendations, gleaned from the record, as to additional standards broadcasters should consider. Still others are the subjects of ongoing rulemaking proceedings. Although some of the principles relate to digital broadcasting, many of them do not depend upon digital technology and can be fully implemented on broadcasters' analog channels.

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This set of principles is not an exhaustive list of ways that broadcasters can serve the public interest, and the Report urges licensees to consider innovative approaches to serving the needs of their communities. The principles enunciated in this Report, however, should provide useful guidance for continuing the dialogue with broadcasters over how they can best serve the public interest.

Also attached is a report on the Children's Television Rules and Guidelines, which reflects that the television industry is not only complying with the three-hour per week guideline for providing programming for children, but that stations are providing an average of four hours of such programming each week. It, however, also shows that more needs to be done to serve our nation's children, including limiting the frequency with which children's core programming is preempted, and publicizing the availability of such programming. The principles enunciated in this Report would allow broadcasters to better address the needs of children.

Thank you for your letter and for your participation in the Commission's proceeding exploring these important issues. I look forward to continuing to work with you on these issues.

Sincerely,



William E. Kennard  
Chairman

Attachments