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Quello: Kids quotas won't pass

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CHICAGO—Children's TV quotas are dead, FCC Commissioner Jim Quello said last week.

Mr. Quello said three commissioners at the Federal Communications Commission, including himself, would oppose a measure to mandate broadcaster quotas of children's programming when the issue comes up for vote, probably in January.

He also said FCC Chairman Reed Hundt might try to delay the vote in the hope that at least one commissioner might change his or her

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Quello says kids quotas won't pass

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position or leave the FCC.

"That still won't work," Mr. Quello said. "They'll still have me harping around. I think the fight's over. There isn't a court in the country that will go for this."

Broadcasters already do a good job of providing kids fare, Mr. Quello said.

He cited a National Association of Broadcasters study released last week that found twice as many educational children's shows on the air now compared with five years ago.

That improvement came even though the Children's TV Act of 1990 didn't impose "quantitative program requirements," Mr. Quello said.

But Mr. Hundt, in a speech to the Center for Media Education last week, questioned the NAB study's accuracy.

"The NAB has given us a different set of assertions based on an anonymous survey of those stations that wished to participate," he said. "I will be interested in knowing if such a survey is scientifically valid."

Mr. Quello said he thought the NAB's study, which surveyed 559 television outlets, was accurate.

"How much more do you have to do?" Mr. Quello said.

"You've got a chairman who's a strong advocate. How much pressure is he putting in the other way? Any objective review will show that broadcasters are responding."

Mr. Hundt also questioned the definition of "children's programming," noting that NBC considered its Saturday morning "NBA Inside Stuff" an educational/informational program.

Mr. Quello said instead of "selective picking" shows that don't meet educational standards, advocates should look at programs that work. But he also criticized government officials that praise some shows and criticize others.

"These endorsements represent federal intrusion, which is a violation of the First Amendment," he said. #

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"I think the fight's over. There isn't a court in the country that will go for this."

—FCC Commissioner Jim Quello on
the fate of kids TV quotas
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