

was counting on 10-year transition period for digital TV, until 2005. But he said transition period would be much shorter because digital TV rollout couldn't start until 1998. Pepper said FCC hoped to have 3 rulemakings on digital spectrum completed by end of year.

In other testimony, HDTV advocates from Grand Alliance said their standard should be adopted, while Consumer Electronics Mfrs. Assn. endorsed waiting for broadcasters to return analog spectrum until consumer acceptance can be analyzed.

**FIELDS WANTS BARRETT AND QUELLO TO STAY AT FCC:** House Telecom Subcommittee Fields (R-Tex.) said March 22 he would like FCC Comrs. Quello and Barrett to remain on job while Telecom Act is being implemented. Quello's term expires June 30. Barrett's expired June 30, 1995, and so far he hasn't indicated change of mind about departing. Fields said both are necessary to fulfill Fields's chief goal of implementing Act. ✓

All 5 commissioners will testify March 27 at first day of House Telecom Subcommittee oversight hearings on FCC. Advance indications were that Fields and other members will closely question Chmn. Hundt on "every function, every regulation" at FCC and that Hundt will be pressed to justify every one. There's also possibility that Fields will propose eventual reduction of FCC to 3 commissioners from 5, some sources said, although others debunked that notion. To prepare for hearings, Fields on March 6 sent letter to representatives of telecom, broadcast and other industries asking for their help: "We have reformed the 'policy,' and now is the time to reform the 'regulator.'" He told industry representatives: "I need your active participation and help -- again." Letter, accompanied by copy of Feb. 1 Congressional Record, day Telecom Act passed, asked industry representatives for "your comments, suggestions, criticisms and personal anecdotes regarding the FCC. Realizing the sensitivity of this request, please address any written response to me 'Personal and Confidential' -- or feel free to have one of your representatives deliver it to me personally." Comments will be held "in the strictest of confidence," Fields said.

For moment, Fields said Barrett "has made valuable contributions and we need him," adding that he would "get on hands and knees to both individuals to ask them to stay." He said he's "absolutely" bothered by prospect of 4-member Commission. He said he's "not being disparaging to the chairman [Hundt] or the other commissioners," all of whom he said are "in the same harness pulling to implementation." But if complications did arise, Fields said, he wants "a full complement [of commissioners] to drive the process forward." He said he has talked with Hundt, who agreed that there should be no delays in moving Act forward. )

Senate Commerce Committee Chmn. Pressler (R-S.D.) also asked Barrett not to leave. But commissioner said he wouldn't honor those requests now: "Where were all the members of my party when I wanted to be reappointed and they weren't there?" His last day on payroll at FCC will be March 31, but when asked where he's going, he responded: "You'll probably know April 2 or 3." His new employer will make announcement, he said, refusing to confirm or deny that it will be Chicago-based Edelman PR Worldwide, which has Washington office as well as sites in other major U.S. and overseas cities. Other sources said, however, that Barrett agreed March 22 to join Edelman office in Washington. If he does so, his knowledge of regulatory world probably would lead him more to providing strategic advice to clients than to public relations duties.

Following March 19 hearing on possible FCC reorganization, Pressler said he hadn't yet spoken with Barrett about latter's planned departure from Commission. Asked if he also would like Comr. Quello, whose term ends June 30, to remain, Pressler said he would "miss him [Quello] if he isn't there [at FCC]." Asked whether he supports Earl Comstock, staffer for Stevens, to be commissioner, he said Barrett was "doing a good job." )

As member of Ill. Commerce Commission, Barrett joined FCC Sept. 8, 1989 (originally appointed by President Bush for one year, then reappointed to full 5-year term) and his term expired last June 30. Asked why he decided to leave now, Barrett said: "It could have been earlier. Keep in mind that I have delayed my departure 2 or 3 times [and] a lot of people have asked me to change my mind" again but he's not going to do so this time.

Meanwhile, group of former FCC officials, including ex-Chmn. Patrick, suggested at March 19 hearing that agency should be converted from multimember commission to one headed by single individual. Ex-Hill staffer Harry Shooshan also endorsed proposal. They ran into strong opposition from Sen. Stevens (R-Alaska), who asked panel: "You want a czar already?" He answered his own question: "Not while I'm around." )

915