

November 8, 1983

SEPARATE STATEMENT OF
FCC COMMISSIONER JAMES H. QUELLO

In re: Petitions of Henry Geller and the National Association of Broadcasters and Radio-Television News Directors Association to Change Commission Interpretation of Subsections 315(a)(3) and (4) of the Communications Act.

During my tenure as a broadcaster in Detroit, I had numerous opportunities to work with the local and state chapters of the League of Women Voters. From this experience, I gained the highest regard for that organization's impartiality, its competence, and its ability to be of great value to a broadcast station manager. To the best of my knowledge, that organization, and others, have done an excellent job in organizing candidate debates which broadcasters cover as bona fide news events.

Given that the existing system appears to be successfully providing valuable information to the public, I brought some reluctance to this proposal for change. Upon reflection, however, I must endorse this decision fully because I see no sound basis to continue these restrictions on broadcasters' First Amendment rights and their related ability to ensure that the public is informed.

The existence of these restrictions casts a shadow on the journalistic integrity of the electronic media, and while I can foresee a continuing role for the League of Women Voters and similar organizations in organizing political debates, such participation should come about because of the value of these organizations' contributions, not because of unnecessarily intrusive government fiat.

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