

Statement of Commissioner James H. Quello
Political Broadcasting Report and Order

Although only one item relating to our political broadcasting rules is on the Agenda, we are announcing a series of actions today. Taken together, the *Report and Order*, the *Declaratory Ruling* on jurisdiction and the enforcement actions should bring some order out of the chaos that lately has characterized our political broadcasting rules.

The *Report and Order* is a long overdue and welcome update and clarification of the Commission's rules governing political broadcasting, particularly those relating to lowest unit charge requirements. Advertising practices have changed radically over the past few years and our interpretations of the law had not kept pace. I believe that by codifying our policies, we will make our requirements more understandable to candidates and easier to apply by broadcasters. I want to congratulate the staff for the excellent job they did in preparing this difficult item.

The *Declaratory Ruling* consolidates jurisdiction over both liability and damages for Section 315(b) violations where it belongs and always has been — at the Commission. Although I think the *Ruling* establishes new complaint procedures without adequate opportunity for public comment, I can enthusiastically support it in all other respects. I am issuing today a separate statement on the *Declaratory Ruling*.

The series of enforcement actions announced today should end the confusion about the findings of last year's political broadcasting audit. Although I think the fines in some of the cases are higher than we have assessed for violations of other rules, I generally support them to help demonstrate the Commission's intent to enforce the law. It is also important to note that of the 30 stations audited, only two were found to have overcharged candidates. The other three fines were for political file violations.

I believe this record of compliance will improve. I think we will find that when our rules are clear, broadcasters are eager to comply.