

Remarks by Commissioner James H. Quello
Before the
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This, the latest of what I have humorously called my pre-posthumous awards, has a very special significance for me -- because I knew and admired Belva Brissett.

She was an outstanding industry representative at the FCC -- probably the best in my 21 years experience at the FCC -- a great role model for Karen Fullum who is doing an excellent job following in her big footsteps.

Belva effectively sold her viewpoints with perception and persistence. She conducted herself with a professionalism of legendary stature. So, it is most fitting that she has been memorialized in perpetuity with this prestigious NAB annual award.

So, heartfelt thanks for adding such a meaningful award and memorable event to my lifetime experiences. I am especially honored and pleased. And I like to think that Belva, up there somewhere, is pleased too.

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Now, let me switch gears for a brief message before you receive an FCC update from my highly respected knowledgeable colleagues, Commissioners Susan Ness and Rachelle Chong.

First, I want to again thank all of you for the gift of friendship. This type of recognition and award is especially gratifying because I have been around here long enough to have voted against most of you at least once. In fact, when I expressed similar appreciation for my widespread support in a reception following my fourth confirmation, the audience, composed mostly of unruly Washington lawyers and regulatory malcontents, yelled "twice." I even threatened them with "thrice." But this is all part of the give and take of government and industry.

As I mentioned after my last confirmation, everyone must remember that commissioners are paid by public funds and appointed to represent the public. So, if private interests conflict with the public interest, the public interest must prevail.

Fortunately, the great majority of broadcasters take pride in supporting the public interest standard. They consider public service requirements to be a special opportunity to exercise civic responsibility rather than a regulatory burden and thus remain worthy of Congressional and FCC support for universal free broadcast service. I am particularly pleased at the way the vast majority of broadcasters have responded to the Children's Television Act by voluntarily increasing service to children without an authoritarian, constitutionally-questionable, quantitative programming mandate from big government. I know this will be reflected in your issues/programs lists that must be kept current and are subject to review at license renewal time.

It is true that broadcasting was my primary lifetime career. I have an inherent interest in its continuing vitality and growth.

I want to be justifiably proud of my heritage and a great majority of time I am. In my experience, I have found an overwhelming majority of broadcasters socially responsible, worthy trustees who are doing an excellent job for their communities. A very small percentage through human error and carelessness cause problems for the entire industry.

In my view, the most important challenge facing the FCC and Congress in the coming decade is to make certain our policies do not erode our nation's most valuable asset -- universal free TV and radio available to all the public -- and being able to serve that public with the best and most advanced digital transmission system. Broadcasting is the most influential and most essential media in a democracy that relies on an informed citizenry and electorate to maintain representative government. This vital free service merits the best in video/audio technology -- particularly when digital HDTV was developed over a period of eight years by top broadcasting executives and engineers.

Separate and apart from my views on HDTV or public interest obligations, let me give you my personal views on the constructive approach to regulation in general.

Overall, I believe government regulation is best conducted in a spirit of mutual cooperation with regulated industries -- broadcasting, cable, telephone, wireless, DBS, etc.

I believe progress can best be achieved with a constructive government attitude that provides incentives for innovation, growth and improvement in service and products for the public. We should reserve adversary proceedings for egregious violations. In return, we should expect that telecommunications companies, because of their great impact on the American way of life, maintain a strong sense of social consciousness.

The great majority of American telecommunications and broadcasting corporations have reasonably fulfilled most expectations by providing the American people with the most sophisticated and extensive communications services in the world and their employees with a good standard of living. One of our highest government priorities must be to preserve America's markets and our preeminent position in world communications to assure healthy, progressive industries with gainfully employed Americans.

Broadcast executives, many of them concerned parents, in general make a much larger contribution to their communities, to advanced technology and to the overall public good than their detractors. Do broadcasters make mistakes? Yes, like all human beings, even Commissioners like me -- and even Chairmen.

Government officials must remind themselves that it was private investment, and enterprising Americans, not government financing or regulation that years ago received empty spectrum, with no established monetary value, out of the air and without government financing and with risk capital built the most comprehensive, diversified, technologically advanced, and best free broadcasting system in the world.

You are facing a great developing multi-channel, multi-faceted communications challenge in the future -- but you are facing it as guardians of the most valuable communications, information and news asset in the nation -- universal free TV and radio available to all the public.

So keep the faith and Good luck!

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