

June 25, 1996

**Statement of  
Commissioner James H. Quello**

**Re: En Banc Hearing on Network Proposals to Provide Time to Presidential Candidates**

Today's hearing is intended to address specific questions regarding the proposals by various networks to provide time to presidential candidates. In more general terms, this en banc hearing also raises many issues regarding how the Commission will govern the changing role of broadcasters in the political process.

The Commission in recent years is moving toward a lesser role in regulating many aspects of communications industries. In the context of political broadcasting, we have witnessed a steady expansion of the exempted coverage of debates, which has allowed a greater degree of discretion for broadcasters. I am especially interested today in the way that we all approach the future development of the government's role, especially in terms of how we may best move toward greater flexibility in the Commission's rules covering political broadcasting.

In some respects, perhaps the best path toward the future may necessarily rely on further congressional action, particularly to the extent we begin to find it is most effective to expand the current exemptions in order to promote greater access to the public to coverage of debates and other political programming. At the present, I am concerned that government regulation of programming in this area through the requirement for equal time may limit the coverage of debates and other events involving major candidates. Therefore, I look forward to discussing the attributes of the proposals made by the various networks in order to see how a measure of flexibility may be extended to provide better information to the public during this election year.

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