

## More congressional interest in HDTV

Government should be taking a leadership position in assuring that the U.S. has a viable high-definition television equipment industry, several congressmen said during a hearing of the House Science, Space and Technology Committee, chaired by Robert A. Roe (D-N.J.). During the hearing, Roe told industry and government witnesses that many in Congress are not in favor of funding high-tech projects such as the NASA space station, superconductivity and the super collider. He asked the witnesses for evidence to "establish a case" that the government should support HDTV when funding bills reach the floor of the House.

There was general support for a bill introduced by Representatives George Brown (D-Calif.) and Doug Walgren (D-Pa.) that would provide funding for industry HDTV research and development partnerships through the Advanced Technology Program of the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The Brown bill is meant to complement an earlier HDTV proposal introduced by Representatives Don Ritter (R-Pa.) and Mel Levine (D-Mass.). During the Science Committee hearing last Wednesday (March 22), Ritter announced that the bill had picked up 16 co-sponsors.

Congressmen Norman Mineta (D-Calif.) and Robert Torricelli (D-N.J.) had harsh words for Albert Sikes, head of the National Telecommunications and Information Administration, following his testimony that: "It is important not to get ahead of the private sector. The private sector must assess the risks and rewards of business opportunities."

Government getting out in front is what "some of us call leadership," Torricelli said. "If indeed the economic health and security of this nation depends upon success in this endeavor, we cannot rest upon the collective judgments of a few private individuals."

Also at the hearing, Craig Fields, deputy director of the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), said that in recent weeks much has been done to process the 82 requests for shares of the \$30 million DARPA plans to grant companies involved in research and development of high-definition displays and video processing and that it hopes "in the near term to start signing contracts." He called the quality of the proposals "outstanding." DARPA has assembled a group of 49 people from several branches of the government to study the proposals and recommend which to support.

**NBC has agreed to sell KNBR(AM) San Francisco**, its only remaining radio property, to **Susquehanna Broadcasting Co.** Value of deal is estimated at **\$20 million**. Buyer is York-Pa.-based group of seven AM's and 11 FM's headed by Art Carlson. KNBR is fulltimer on 680 khz with 50 kw.

**Supreme Court** in 9-0 ruling last week **held that news organizations have no right to individuals' criminal records**, even where those records had once been publicly available. Justice John Paul Stevens, writing for unanimous court, said release of arrest and conviction records would be "unwarranted invasion of privacy." Decision was issued in case that began 11 years ago, when CBS News's Robert Schakne filed Freedom of Information Act request for information regarding former Representative Daniel J. Flood (D-Pa.). Flood later admitted to conspiracy to solicit illegal campaign contributions from potential government contractors.

**Turner Broadcasting System** had no comment on report it was **looking to start regional cable sports network in Southeast**. Nearly all professional and college teams in area already appear on WTBS(TV) Atlanta. Move is seen as defensive strategy in face of NBC-Cablevision regional sports push. Before NBC-Cablevision marriage, regional service was never high on company's agenda.

GTG Entertainment last week named broadcasting veteran **Tom Kirby** as **executive producer of USA Today on TV**. Former *Washington Star* editor Jim Bellows, brought in last October as managing editor to help tune up the show, is being encouraged by Kirby and staff to stay on in his present position, according to GTG executive Bud Rukeyser Jr. Since its premiere last September, the program has been struggling with critics and audiences. Kirby, who begins his new job today (March 27), was most recently president and general manager of Gannett's KOCO-TV Oklahoma City. (GTG is joint venture between Grant Tinker and Gannett.) His previous experience includes stints as news director at KUSA-TV Denver and KARE-TV Minneapolis. "Tom is as good a guy as they have," said Rukeyser, "and one of the things we have to do better on the show is link up with the paper. We thought that a guy who knows the Gannett buttons to push was all to the good. *USA Today on TV* received a 6.0 national rating in February, up 11% from November, but show has been juggled by many stations out of more desirable

time periods since its debut.

Denver Oilman **Marvin Davis**, who exited show business with sale of 20th Century Fox Film Corp. to Rupert Murdoch in 1985, reentered it last week in partnership with Prudential Insurance Co. of America as buyer of Spectradyne Inc. for \$635 million. Dallas-based Spectradyne operates pay-per-view movie service serving some 500,000 hotel rooms. Sellers include Robert Bass, American Express, Equitable Life Assurance and Hicks & Haas. Prudential has dabbled (and gotten burned) in pay television business before. It was principal backer of United Satellite Communications Inc., medium-power satellite broadcasting service that flopped in 1985.

**McKinney tapped for ATSC.** James C. McKinney, who served as director of the White House military office during the Reagan Administration and before that as chief of FCC's Mass Media Bureau, has accepted the post of chairman of Advanced Television Systems Committee (ATSC), succeeding E. William Henry. He was approved last Wednesday (March 23) at a meeting of the ATSC executive board.



McKinney joins ATSC at a time when the organization is in a state of flux following the formation of the FCC's advisory committee on advanced television service, which has taken over many of ATSC's primary activities. "They need a new sense of direction. Maybe Jim can coalesce that," said Greg DePriest of the Association of Maximum Service Telecasters, an ATSC executive board member. McKinney argues that ATSC is still an important organization. "ATSC is the only organization that tries to bring together all aspects of industry interest in high-definition television," including manufacturing, broadcast, cable interests and others, he said. "I think that makes it a unique voice for government agencies to hear. I know when I was at the FCC, we listened very carefully to an organization that was broad-based."