



Relaying the funding challenges public broadcasting faces every day, WETA-TV President/CEO Sharon Percy Rockefeller says she is nevertheless "convinced that public broadcasting's deserved reputation for excellent programming and the trust we have earned from our viewers will continue to distinguish us in the quickly proliferating field of channel choices."

Speaking last Wednesday at a Washington Metropolitan Cable Club luncheon, Rockefeller said that TV viewers will come to rely on programmers, station managers and cable operators to sort through programming in a 500-channel universe. As that happens, program providers will become "suitors for [viewers'] affections and loyalties." Rockefeller maintains that the "thoughtfulness, intelligence and professionalism" of public broadcasting will allow its survival in the multichannel world.

FCC Chairman Reed Hundt held an open-door "brown-bag lunch" with the public last week. Present were commission employees, lobbyists and the press. Hundt used the opportunity to stress the increasing role of the FCC as a consumer protection agency as the communications industry moves from a monopoly-oriented industry to a competitive marketplace. "It needs to be our concern that consumers are not taken advantage of," Hundt said. Hundt said the agency may establish an advisory committee on electronic filing and repeatedly referred to his regulated constituency as "customers." He also said the recently announced list of fines against more than 20 radio stations and one cable system demonstrates the FCC's commitment to equal employment opportunity. He asked minority broadcasters for patience while the FCC works through the backlog of cases. Earlier this month, the FCC announced more than \$300,000 in fines against 12 radio licensees. And a Florida cable system owned by Adelphi Communications Corp. was fined \$121,500.

Meanwhile, the FCC's ownership division is going high-tech. Its moving racks of floor-to-ceiling files are being replaced by the Excelsior computer system, which holds an imaged copy of a file and uses a mouse for access. The FCC will start with two terminals, with plans to expand to four or five. Files are disappearing from the shelves to be scanned and stored, so expect some temporary difficulty finding information. The division is scheduled to go on line in June.

National Association of Broadcasters President Edward Fritts is still working to head off a bill by Senator Strom Thurmond (R-S.C.) that would regulate beer and wine ads on television and radio. Fritts says it was premature to say the NAB has lined up the votes needed to kill the proposal when it comes up for a vote in the Commerce Committee. The vote has not been scheduled, but com-

mittee Chairman Ernest Hollings (D-S.C.) says he will set a date when Thurmond is ready.

House Telecommunications Subcommittee Chairman Ed Markey (D-Mass.) is not giving up. He has issued another statement criticizing broadcasters for failing to support his V-chip bill, which would mandate technology enabling parents to block programs with a violence rating. This time, Markey noted that the Association of National Advertisers has endorsed the concept of using technology to "empower parents."

"Every major sector of the television industry has come out in support of blocking-technology for parents—except the broadcasters," Markey says. "The advertisers now join the satellite industry, the cable industry and the electronics industry is standing ready to give parents more control of what comes into their living room." Markey is referring to an ANA policy statement that says the organization is "interested in private initiatives to provide TV viewers with

a greater ability to evaluate and control viewing choices, including parental advisories, violence rating systems, and the development of new technologies."

Former Kennedy and Johnson administration FCC chairman E. William Henry is leaving his Washington law practice to head a foundation for minority businesses in his hometown of Memphis, Tenn. Henry was appointed to the FCC in 1962 by President Kennedy and chaired the commission from 1963-66. He has spent the past 20 years specializing in communications law at Ginsburg, Feldman and Bress.



In Memphis, Henry will head the Rising Tide Foundation, a not-for-profit group that develops business opportunities for African Americans by working with both the black and the white business communities. He always has meant to return to Memphis. "I hadn't intended to do it so early, but the opportunity came along and I took it," he says. Henry will move in early April. In addition to his foundation duties, he plans to retain and expand his radio station ownership. Currently, Henry owns two stations in Amherst, Mass.: WTTT(AM) and WRNX(FM). Otherwise, he plans to get out of the communications business, he says.

Cox Enterprises seems to be in the middle of information superhighway policy-making. Over at the NCTA, Jim Robbins, president of Cox Cable Communications, chairs NCTA's telecommunications policy committee. Meanwhile, the NAB's telco-entry task force is headed by Nick Trigony, president, Cox Broadcasting. Cox's influence doesn't stop there. The company's VP for public policy, Alex Netchvolodoff, is involved in deliberations over pending telecommunications reform legislation. ■

Washington Watch

Edited By Kim McAvoy