

STATEMENT OF COMMISSIONER
MICHAEL J. COPPS

RE: Requests for Extension of the October 5, 2001 Digital Television Construction Deadline.

I am committed to aggressively and responsibly promote the rollout of digital television. I am therefore extremely reluctant to grant extensions to our DTV construction deadlines. I do so here both because the nine stations before us have presented the Commission with satisfactory individual explanations for their failures to meet construction obligations, and because we simultaneously set in motion a proceeding to establish guidelines on how to deal with licensees that fail to meet their deadlines in the future.

I am pleased that the NPRM not only sets forth a proposed set of remedial measures, but also asks whether this set of remedies is aggressive enough. Commenters should be sure to advise the Commission on other steps that might move us closer to full DTV rollout, as I am troubled by the possibility that a series of waivers, or a series of six-month delays, could significantly undermine our efforts. I hope that we will gather comments and produce an order examining new guidelines as soon as possible.

We have made some progress in the past few weeks on the DTV rollout and I commend our Chairman for the new energy he has imported to this important initiative, and for his commitment to get the job done on time.. I hope that, increasingly, the Commission will be able to focus its energies on positive news rather than on more delays.