

Media Contact:

Janice Wise (202) 418-8165

janice.wise@fcc.gov

For Immediate Release**FCC PROPOSES TO EXPAND VIDEO DESCRIPTION RULES**

Action would increase the number of video described programs and provide easier access for individuals who are blind or visually impaired

WASHINGTON, March 31, 2016 – The Federal Communications Commission today adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) that recommends updating its video description rules to expand the availability of -- and consumer access to -- video described programming. Video description makes video programming accessible to individuals who are blind or visually impaired by enabling audio-narration to describe key visual elements of a television program during pauses in the dialogue. Through video description, individuals who are blind or visually impaired can independently enjoy and follow popular television shows.

In 2011, the Commission reinstated rules that require some television broadcast stations and multichannel video programming distributors (MVPDs) to provide video description for a portion of the video programming that they offer to consumers on television. The [current obligation](#) to provide video description applies to TV broadcast stations that are affiliated with ABC, CBS, Fox, or NBC and are located in the top 60 television markets. The rules also currently apply to the top five non-broadcast networks on pay-TV systems that serve 50,000 or more subscribers. Congress gave the Commission authority in the Twenty-First Century Communications and Video Accessibility Act of 2010 (CVAA) to issue additional video description regulations if the benefits of doing so outweigh the costs.

Since their initial adoption, the video description rules have provided substantial benefits to persons who are blind or visually impaired by making television programming more accessible. The Notice of Proposed Rulemaking tentatively concludes that these substantial benefits outweigh the costs of the recommended additional requirements.

Specifically, the NPRM proposes to:

- Increase the required amount of video described programming on each included network carried by a covered broadcast station or MVPD from 50 hours per calendar quarter to 87.5 hours;
- Increase the number of networks subject to the video description rules from four broadcast and five non-broadcast networks to five broadcast and ten non-broadcast networks;
- Adopt a no-backsliding rule, which would ensure that included networks remain subject to the requirements even if they fall out of the top five or top ten ranking;
- Remove the threshold requirement that non-broadcast networks must reach 50 percent of pay-TV households in order to be subject to our video description rules;

- Require that covered distributors provide dedicated customer service contacts who can answer questions about video description; and
- Require that petitions for exemptions from the video description requirements and related filings be electronically filed with the Commission.

The NPRM also asks for comment on timelines for implementation, as well as on any other changes to the video description rules that would help ensure blind and visually impaired consumers have access to television programming.

Action by the Commission March 31, 2016, by Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (FCC 16-37). Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, and Rosenworcel approving. Commissioners Pai and O’Rielly approving in part and dissenting in part. Chairman Wheeler, Commissioners Clyburn, Rosenworcel, Pai and O’Rielly issuing separate statements.

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