

# OPINION PAGES

## Guest VIEW

### Free time FCC proposal may affect political campaigns

From The San Diego Union-Tribune

One of the more fascinating suggestions for solving the campaign-finance conundrum comes from the Federal Communications Commission.

Soon, the FCC, which oversees the nation's airwaves, will grant broadcasters access to second TV stations, free of charge. The transaction is part of a plan to accelerate the installation of high-definition TV, the next generation of crisp TV images. In return for this electronic largess, some FCC officials are recommending that broadcasters provide free air time for politicians pursuing federal office.

Seems like an eminently fair exchange.

The airwaves, after all, are public property. That's why their use by broadcasters is contingent upon the grant of licenses by the federal government. To obtain such a license, the networks must demonstrate their commitment to the public good.

Stations do so in part by airing public-service announcements that generate no revenues whatsoever. This would appear a small price to pay for having access to millions of viewers, in return for which sponsors pay large sums of money to transmit their commercial messages.

Political ads are public-service messages. They communicate a candidate's views on issues, thereby providing voters with the facts they need to make informed judgments. That these ads often get down and dirty, instead of illuminating the issues is depressing. But that's no reason to assume things cannot improve with some fine-tuning.

That could be done with free air time.

Broadcasters stand to make more than \$70 billion from the additional TV channels. In exchange for this bonanza, one would think the networks could provide free TV time to candidates.

This reform makes sense on several levels. Pols with ready access to the airwaves would not spend so much time begging for campaign contributions, which in turn would enable them to concentrate on the issues instead of raffling off access to the highest bidder.

The obscene cost of waging political campaigns is correlated to the ever-increasing expense of buying TV time. Two decades ago, pols were shelling out \$25 million on TV ads; today it costs at least that much just to finance a senate campaign in California. In 1996, candidates nationwide spent \$400 million, with the presidential contenders allocating two-thirds of their budget to TV, while senatorial hopefuls were putting 42 percent of their chips into TV spots.

President Clinton supports the free air-time concept along with Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., who is trying without much success to persuade Congress to clean up the way campaigns are financed. There is precious little enthusiasm on Capitol Hill for changing an incumbent-friendly system. But the FCC could do so through its rule-making authority. This is an intriguing idea worth serious consideration.

## Mehsling's VIEW



## DN LETTERS

### An X-Chip?!

This is in reference to the column entitled "Shake your booty" (DN, Wednesday). I appreciate J.J. Harder's opinion, but in my opinion his column just outright sucks.

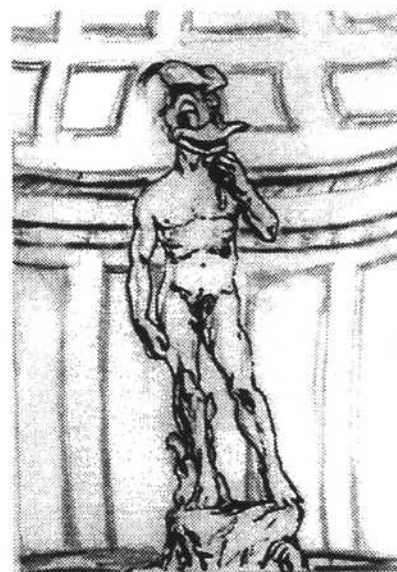
First of all how many kindergartners do you see running around naked? We are all the products of these cartoons that in your opinion have "naked" characters. The majority of us have watched the "Smurfs" or "Yogi Bear," but how many of us (the student population) do you see running around the campus naked?

Or even better, how many children do you see or hear of running naked around their classrooms? If this was such a problem then it would have been addressed already. Maybe we would already have a chip for TVs — the X-chip for those X-rated cartoons.

On second thought maybe we should boycott the Discovery channel for all of those nature shows? I mean, all those animals running around naked in the wild? Could you imagine the consequence of thousands of 7-year-olds running around in the forest nude? Kids know from a very young age the difference between reality and make believe. A cartoon is not real and only used for humor and entertainment.

No. 2 Bestiality? Who are you trying to fool here? I would love to know just how many 5-year-olds you have personally seen trying to "get it on" with the family pet. I am wondering: Do you know something that we (as the population) don't know? If so I'd love to hear it.

No. 3 The reason that violence is such a problem in cartoons is there is so much of it. Children learn from what they see and hear.



I can't recall the last time I saw Yogi Bear trying to seduce Boo Boo. We have enough violence in our society as is and for children to learn it at a young age is just wrong. Maybe having our kids learn to love other things instead of violence would be a step in a better direction (though I don't think the family pet would appreciate it).

Not once in my life have I found Yogi's outfit seductive, noticed that Itchy and Scratchy lacked an outfit or thought that Wile E. Coyote was giving me a full frontal view. But that's me. (Now that I think about it, are any of the cartoon characters anatomically correct? I think not.) This column is definitely the product of an overactive imagination. You also failed to mention that any cartoon character that resembles a human is always clothed — for example "The Jetsons."

I must have missed the episode where Judy gives the kids a full frontal. If this column was written in

humor, then I and many of my peers missed where the humor was.

Jon McGrath  
freshman  
general studies

### One Species

In response to John Flaherty's "Sick of It All" (DN, Thursday), I agree that the arguments are getting tiring, but the situation is far from resolved. At least you have nothing against homosexual marriages. Unfortunately, your point about not allowing them to raise children is disturbing.

You can't grant them marriage and not grant them the right to raise children. It's as simple as that. Your letter is printed right next to one from Craig Willford's "Strong Household" (DN, Thursday), who says that he found being raised by two women to be a positive experience.

The whole point is homosexuals are human beings and American citizens, and our government is obligated to provide for them those rights to which everyone else is entitled. Marriage is not just a religious union. It is also a legally binding contract. So, why does everyone just look at the religious aspects of this issue?

If the government is providing legal recognition of marriage, then homosexuals must not be excluded. They are no less human beings than any other minority group, yet they are being discriminated against. These same arguments apply to the question of raising children. The United States was founded on the principles of equality and freedom. Why are we now trying to deny the very basis of our nation?

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