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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF EDUCATIONAL BROADCASTERS

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BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE NAEB UHF ASSIGNMENT PLAN

A nationwide television channel assignment plan devised by an electronic computer was released on Monday, November 4, by the NAEB. The plan provides for approximately 2600 assignments of television channels in the UHF band. No additional assignments were made for VHF channels. All assignments made by the computer were built around existing facilities, and none of the 2,365 new assignments which the computer was able to make affects the 202 educational and commercial UHF stations now operating or holding construction permits.

The NAEB report has been presented to E. William Henry, Chairman of the FCC, and to members of the FCC staff who assisted in providing data for the computer program which prepared the assignment table. Steps are now being taken to file the plan with the FCC, either as a recommendation that the Commission issue the plan as an alternative to its own proposed UHF table released two weeks ago, or as a comment in the current rule-making proceedings for UHF assignments.

At a news conference in Washington on November 4, NAEB President Harley said, "We look upon this not only as an opportunity to meet the increasing demand of education for broadcast television channels, but as a method for increasing the number and diversity of commercial television stations. The additional channels provided for in the NAEB plan meet needs in both areas for additional facilities, and the computer approach which made this possible is now documented as a reliable method for solving a variety of nationwide or regional allocations problems."

The assignment plan recommends that 864 UHF assignments be reserved for educational purposes. This is in addition to 45 educational UHF stations now operating or holding construction permits and is also in addition to slightly over 100 educational VHF stations now operating or reserved. Considering the entire VHF-UHF plan, the NAEB is recommending that approximately 1,000 channels be reserved. A number of cities are provided with at least two reservations and additional reservations are provided in larger cities, some of which are already operating two educational channels.

Using the computer to consider the complete range of alternatives, the NAEB plan has found well over 600 more assignments than are in the FCC's proposed Table. Many of these additional assignments are in places where television coverage is desirable but not necessarily of primary importance at the moment. Thus, the NAEB plan improves the potential diversity of television service not only for educational purposes but for commercial purposes as well.

There are three important points regarding these recommended reservations. First, NAEB has not sought to load this with educational reservations, either by asking that even a majority of unused channels be set apart for non-commercial purposes, or by suggesting that all low UHF channels be reserved and commercial broadcasters be left with the remainder.

Second, the plan does not impose a limit of educational reservations for any location. Although no location is assigned more than four reservations, this is not necessarily a maximum. The effort has been to provide reservations where they will be needed. In a number of cases, commercial broadcasters have been sitting on CP's for a number of years, thereby preventing others from access to a facility. In several large communities this has already worked as a disadvantage for educational broadcasters and it is hoped that by avoiding a plan which sets a maximum of two educational channels per community (as proposed in the FCC plan) that the number of problems caused by the CP-sitter can be reduced. The NAEB plan provides greater protection for educational interests by providing more reserved channels, but it also benefits commercial broadcasters by providing a greater total number of assignments. The plan reflects planning for commercial potential as it relates to population distribution, as well as a consideration of educational needs.

Third, reservations were based on statewide television plans which have been developed for education, NAEB surveys of educational need, and other information which demonstrated the importance of providing channels for educational purposes.

Following are the recommendations which NAEB makes with respect to this plan and the procedures with which it was devised.

1. On the basis of the assumptions and background presented in this report, the technical precision with which this plan has been developed and the possibility for further exploration and use of the computer techniques for channel allocations, the NAEB recommends that the FCC adopt the Table of Assignments which is included with the report.

2. In consideration of information already included in the report, the NAEB recommends that the FCC adopt this Table as a new basic Table and that changes proposed for specific locations be based on this Table of Assignments.

3. It is recommended that the FCC adopt the reservations which are listed in the NAEB Table of Assignments and that the Commission consider the reserved channels in this report as providing only for minimum educational needs. For this reason, it is further recommended that unreserved channels be considered as generally available either to commercial or educational applicants without pre-judgment that a number of educational reservations fixed at this time can serve all future needs.

4. The NAEB recommends that the FCC accept not only the basic plan which is presented, but also the recorded data which are available for the Commission's use at any time for whatever modification or further exploration may be desired.

5. Finally, it is recommended that the FCC use this information as the basis for a periodic re-examination and possible re-allocation of the unoccupied channels of the UHF spectrum, and that computer procedures be used to conduct the re-examinations and re-allocation.

The study was conducted by an NAEB staff directed by Vernon Bronson. Technical consultants were the Jansky and Bailey Broadcast-Television Division of Atlantic Research Corporation. Funds for the study were provided by the National Defense Education Act, through the United States Office of Education.

Copies of the NAEB UHF Assignment Table are being sent to all Active and Associate members.

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