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MESQUITE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

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JAMES TERRY BELL, SUPERINTENDENT

00-258

August 21, 2001

Honorable Phil Gramm
United States Senate
2323 Bryan Street, Suite 2150
Dallas, Texas 75201

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SEP 24 2001

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Dear Senator Gramm:

On behalf of the Mesquite Independent School District, licensee of KHS-78, we write to you about an issue of importance to our community: the ITFS (Instructional Television Fixed Services) spectrum. Specifically, we ask you to support the educators in your district and urge the Federal Communications Commission to remove the ITFS spectrum from consideration in its deliberations over finding a new home for new cellular phone services.

ITFS is a distance learning technology that has provided teacher training and classroom instruction to millions of students across the United States for more than 35 years. ITFS licensees serve thousands of public and parochial schools, colleges, and universities, providing greater access to professional development, expanded curricular opportunities, and various other educational offerings. In Mesquite we began utilizing ITFS in 1967, and presently provide more than 50,000 annual program showings which support classroom instruction, continuing education, parent education, lifetime activities and provide the community with news and information on Mesquite schools.

Additionally, ITFS networks are a tremendous resource to the educational community. Recent technological improvements permit upgraded ITFS systems to provide two-way, high speed broadband Internet, digital content delivery, and the potential for 10:1 or better video compression – offering the educational licensee a path to expanded capacity and innovative technological integration in the classroom.

These benefits notwithstanding, the future of ITFS has been called into doubt. Third generation cell phone service (also known as 3G) providers want additional spectrum for new mobile phone services. The ITFS spectrum as been targeted as a possible choice by the FCC. Earlier this year, a Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proceeding on this issue found that the cellular industry is generally uninterested because they want to use the 1.7GHz band currently occupied by the military for 3G services. Furthermore, the FCC itself found in March that using the ITFS spectrum would be virtually impossible for technical reasons. Unfortunately, the FCC has repeatedly delayed making a decision on ITFS. With the postponement of a previously scheduled July 2001 decision, the future of the educational spectrum continues to hang in the balance.

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The Hon. Phil Gramm

Given the demonstrated benefit of ITFS, the lack of desire for the spectrum on the part of the 3G industry, and the FCC's findings, we urge you to stand up for students and teachers in your state and directly urge the FCC to remove the ITFS spectrum from the list of candidates for 3G service spectrum immediately. Mesquite ISD hopes that you will support us in our ongoing educational mission by maintaining the integrity of our spectrum.

Respectfully,

James Terry, Ed.D.