

March 9, 2005

Joseph Garcia, Chief Communications Officer

**SUBJECT: APPROVE THE CABLE CARRIAGE AGREEMENT
NEGOTIATED BY THE ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC
TELEVISION STATIONS, THE PUBLIC BROADCASTING
SERVICE, AND THE NATIONAL CABLE &
TELECOMMUNICATIONS ASSOCIATION**

**COMMITTEE: INSTRUCTIONAL EXCELLENCE & COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT**

Under current federal law, WLRN-TV is entitled to cable television carriage for its analog channel on all cable systems in the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale television market. The broadcast industry generally is moving from analog to digital transmissions; WLRN is making the same transition. When WLRN eventually turns off its analog signal, cable systems will be required to carry WLRN's primary digital signal.

One advantage of digital broadcasting is stations will be able to air up to six signals within the existing analog bandwidth. As a result, stations have been urging Congress and the Federal Communications Commission to amend federal law to require cable systems to carry some or all of these additional digital channels. To date, no federal action has come.

The Association of Public Television Stations, the Public Broadcasting Service, and the National Cable & Telecommunications Association have negotiated a cable carriage agreement to address the concern. The principal elements of the agreement include:

1. During the period when public television stations are broadcasting in both analog and digital formats, upgraded cable systems that offer high definition television will carry up to four non-commercial digital signals from one public television station in the market. (The Miami-Ft. Lauderdale market is serviced both by WLRN and WPBT.)
2. Once all stations are transmitting only digital signals, the cable systems will carry up to four signals from each must-carry public television station, including WLRN. (It is unknown when this transition to all-digital broadcasting will take place, but it is several years away.)

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To go into effect, the proposed agreement must be ratified by public broadcasting stations reaching 80 percent of TV households in the United States. Due its strong showing in the May 2004 ratings book, WLRN is the designated voting station for the Miami-Ft. Lauderdale market. This does not mean that WLRN automatically will be the initial station benefiting from the agreement; the local cable operator will select the station whose additional signals will be carried initially.

A copy of the proposed agreement will be transmitted to Board Members under separate cover and a copy placed on file in the Office of the Board Recording Secretary and the Citizen Information Center.

RECOMMENDED:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida,

1. approve the cable carriage agreement negotiated by the Association of Public Television Stations, the Public Broadcasting Service, and the National Cable & Telecommunications Association; and
2. authorize the Superintendent of Schools to convey the School Board's approval to the three parties.