

# FCC approves technology to limit digital TV Internet piracy

BY JONATHAN D. SALANT  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON — The government Tuesday approved an anti-piracy mechanism that will make it harder for computer users to illegally distribute digital TV programs on the Internet. The goal is to speed the transition to higher quality digital broadcasts and ensure such programming remains free.

Broadcasters and the movie industry had urged the Federal Communications Commission to take such action, while consumer groups said it will force some people to purchase new electronics.

Some people already share TV shows and movies online, though the practice is limited by the speed of Internet connections — it can take many hours to transfer high-quality copies.

But as Internet connections get faster and broadcasters switch to much clearer digital television, the movie and television industries fear consumers will put high-quality copies of shows and films on the Web that others can download for free. This would reduce the broadcasters' ability to sell the shows for syndication or overseas.

The music industry saw CD sales fall as free music sharing proliferated on the Internet. It has started to sue listeners who illegally distribute songs online.

The five-member FCC voted unanimously to allow a "broadcast flag" to be added to digital programming to block broader distribution on the Internet, though the two Democrats on the panel expressed some reservations. Republican FCC Chairman Michael Powell called it "an important step toward preserving the viability of free over-the-air television."

In its order, the FCC told makers of digital television receivers that by July 1, 2005, their models must recognize the flag, an elec-



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tronic signal that broadcasters can embed in their programs.

The commission said the order applies only to electronics equipment that can receive digital broadcast signals, not digital VCRs, DVD players and personal computers without digital tuners.

"The FCC scored a big victory for consumers and the preservation of high-value, over-the-air free broadcasting with its decision," said Jack Valenti, president of the Motion Picture Association of America.

Viacom, parent company of the CBS television network, called the decision a "historic step forward for consumers."

Consumer and advocacy groups reacted just as strongly against the decision.

"Having just given big media companies more control over what consumers can see on their TV sets by lifting media ownership limits, the FCC has now given these same companies more control over what users can do with that content, leaving consumers as two-time losers," said Gigi Sohn, president of Public Knowledge, a Washington-based advocacy group on technology and copyright issues.

Congress already has told the TV industry to switch their broadcasts by 2007 to a digital format, which uses computer language, from the current analog format, which uses radio signals sent as waves. After the switch over, consumers who don't subscribe to a cable or satellite service would need digital tuners, either inside a TV or in a set-top box.

FCC officials said the flag would not prevent consumers from using existing or new DVD

or VCR machines to make copies of TV programs. But the signal is designed to make it more difficult for consumers to then transfer those copies to the Internet and make them available to potentially millions of others free of charge.

Chris Murray, legislative counsel for Consumers Union, the publisher of Consumer Reports magazine, said consumers won't be able to use their old VCRs and DVD players to play back programs recorded on newer machines that recognize the broadcast flag.

"Technology always marches on, but that's normally because new devices offer consumers better features and more flexibility to woo buyers in the marketplace, not because government fiat has rendered a particular technology obsolete," Murray said.

Under the FCC order, broadcasters will decide whether to add the flag to their programs, including, if they want, news and public affairs shows. Cable and satellite operators must also make sure that their systems transmit the flag or use some other electronic signal to prevent mass copying. The FCC plans to consider whether to allow cable and satellite companies to encrypt all digital programs.

FCC Commissioner Michael Copps said the decision did not go far enough to safeguard viewers' privacy.

"Improper use of the technologies could arguably allow such things as tracking personal information," Copps said. "The broadcast flag should be about protecting digital content, not about tracking Americans' viewing habits."

# S.C. Democrat criticizes Dean for Confederate flag comments

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA — The former chairman of the South Carolina Democratic Party is criticizing Democratic presidential candidate Howard Dean for comments he made about the Confederate flag.

The former Vermont governor said last weekend in Iowa that he still wants "to be the candidate for guys with Confederate flags in their pickup trucks."

The comment riled former South Carolina Democratic Party Chairman Dick Harpootlian, who said Tuesday it indicates Dean's lack of understanding of the South. He sent a letter to Dean on Monday, asking him to stop using the flag "as a measure of discerning independent voters in the South."

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"As you spend more time in South Carolina, I am sure you are going to realize that the average independent South Carolinian is much more cosmopolitan than ... you seem to be willing to give them credit for being," Harpootlian wrote. "The stereotype of an independent Southerner as a rebel-flag-waving pickup truck driver is wrong."

Dean sent a letter to Harpootlian on Tuesday, saying he did not intend to stereotype Southerners and believes the Confederate flag is a "despicable symbol of racism, oppression."

"I do not believe that one can assign blanket stereotypes to

Southerners or any other group in our country," Dean wrote. "I want people with Confederate flags on their trucks to put down those flags and vote Democratic, because the need for quality health care, jobs and good education knows no racial boundaries."

The Confederate flag is a sensitive issue in South Carolina. The flag was removed from the Statehouse dome in 2000 and moved to its current location at a monument on Statehouse grounds.

The state National Association for the Advancement of Colored People began an economic boycott of the state in 2000 that they plan to continue until the flag is completely removed.

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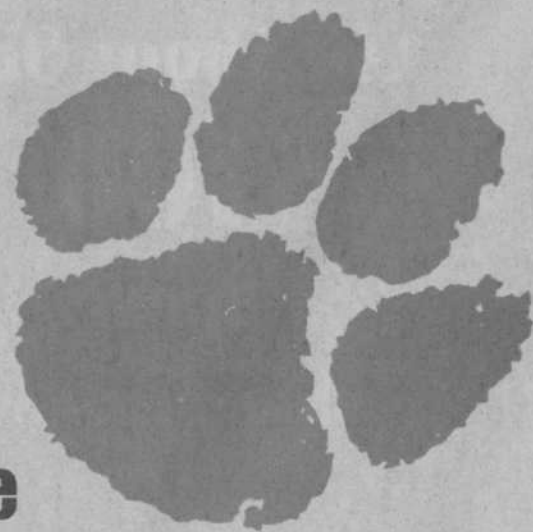
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