

“Saved By The Bell”

“Saved By The Bell” is a weekly television series targeted to teens 13-16 years of age, which explores social themes and coping strategies through the daily school life of six teen-aged friends at Bayside High who help each other make the most of growing up in a complicated world. The multi-ethnic cast members serve as role models for young teen viewers as they deal with such issues as dealing with the death of a loved one, the right to say "no," the meaning of heroism, teenage alcohol use and other issues of particular concern to young teens.

The Children’s Television Act of 1990 (“CTA”) imposed a requirement on the FCC to consider in its review of television station renewals the extent to which the licensee had served the educational and informational needs of children through its overall programming, including programming specifically designed to serve such needs. In adopting the CTA, Congress recognized a number of existing programs that already served such needs and in that context specifically mentioned “Saved By The Bell” in the Senate Report that accompanied the CTA, describing the program as “valuable” and “aimed at high school students and addressing typical problems and conflicts faced by teens.”¹ In adopting the regulations that implemented the CTA in 1991, the FCC also noted that Congress had singled out “Saved By The Bell” for mention: “The legislative history provides a wealth of examples of children’s programming that is educational and informational. These include . . . “Saved By The Bell” (topical problems and conflicts faced by teens) Where determinations of whether a program qualifies as ‘educational and informational’ are in doubt, we will expect licensees to substantiate their determinations. We will rely on the guidance given in the legislative history, including the specific examples cited above, in ruling on the sufficiency of such demonstrations.”² Consistent with these findings, the FCC has granted the renewal applications of television stations that have relied on “Saved By The Bell” to satisfy their obligation to air programming specifically designed to serve the educational and informational needs of children aged 16 years and under.

¹ Children’s Television Act of 1989, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, S. Rep. No. 227, 101st Cong., 1st Sess. 8 (1989).

² Policies and Rules Concerning Children’s Television Programming, 6 FCC Red 2111, ¶ 26 (1991).