

Public Broadcast Sponsorship Overview v6-5/06

There are no written “laws” in regard to this policy by the FCC. An FCC Commission found the following and wrote, “Beyond the airing of paid promotional announcements, our recent review of underwriting activities indicates that some public broadcasters may be airing donor and underwriter announcements which exceed the Commission's guidelines. In light of these instances and an ongoing debate in the public broadcasting community on these issues, we believe that a brief statement concerning the obligations of public broadcasters with respect to donor and underwriting acknowledgements is appropriate. In March 1984, we relaxed our noncommercial policy to allow public broadcasters to expand or “enhance” the scope of donor and underwriter acknowledgements to include (1) logograms or slogans which identify and *do not* promote, (2) location information, (3) value neutral descriptions of a product line or service, and (4) brand and trade names and product or service listings. *1984 Order* at 263. That action was taken as another step in our ongoing effort to strike a reasonable balance between the financial needs of public broadcast stations and their obligation to provide an essentially noncommercial service. It was our view that “enhanced underwriting” would offer significant potential benefits to public broadcasting in terms of attracting additional business support and would thereby improve the financial self-sufficiency of the service without threatening its underlying noncommercial nature.”

Sponsors spots for air on public broadcast networks are to be designed, edited and produced as a way of thanking and identifying supporters. The “spirit” of the spot should be to show support for either the program or the network. The overall theme of the spot should not be commercial in nature or design.

Sponsorship Messages May:

- Be :30 or less in length
- Value neutral descriptions of sponsor’s products or services
- Show a logo
- Use a well-established slogan or corporate positioning statement unless that statement is promotional in nature. I.e. “The Blanket, the best blanket in the world”
- Show a telephone number or website address for no more than 49% of the total spot including the end of the spot. In a 30 second spot, the web site URL should not be on the screen more than 15 seconds including the end of the spot.
- Show event dates and locations. No ticket purchase calls allowed.
- Use music or sound effects identifying the company, people and other voice-overs
- Make an association between sponsor and program

Sponsor Messages May Not:

- Use comparative or superlative language, I.e. Best, greatest, number one.
- Offer price, discount or financing information (including “free”)
- Use calls to action which direct the viewer to purchase the product or service (i.e. call now, visit our website, free trial period, 2 for 1, etc.)
- Include endorsements either direct, implied or in text.
- Include testimonials from shown in video or audio
- Include a web site address or phone number in excessive amounts. A good rule of thumb, 49% of the total spot including the end of the spot. In a 30 second spot, the web site URL should not be on the screen more than 15 seconds including the end of the spot.