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High Court To Rule On Equal Time Rules

WASHINGTON (AP) — With an eye toward this year's presidential race, two major networks want the Supreme Court to take a new look at federal equal-time regulations.

The court was asked to decide before next spring whether Federal Communications Commission rules requiring broadcasters to provide free time to individuals or groups to answer

"personal attack" and "political editorials" don't violate free-press constitutional guarantees.

An appeal to the high court was filed Monday by the Columbia Broadcasting system and National Broadcasting Co., along with the Radio Television News Directors Association and eight operators of radio and television stations.

FCC rules require every station that broadcasts a statement attacking the "honesty, character, integrity or like personal qualities" of any individual or group to notify the individual or group, furnish a tape, script or summary of the attack and of-

fer free broadcast time for an answer.

The same applies when a station broadcasts an editorial favoring a specific candidate.

The appeal said certain programs—such as interviews—contain many editorial statements.

It maintained that allowing replies to each such statement would prove impossible.

The net effect of the so-called fairness doctrine would be to force stations to eliminate such statements altogether, said the appeal.

It noted requests for free time would be likely to increase sharply as this year's political campaigns get underway.