

DRAFT

VOLUNTARY UNIFORM RATING SYSTEM FOR MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT

Q&As

Q: Since the First Lady announced her support for a voluntary uniform rating system, what has she done to work towards that goal?

A: The First Lady has asked her staff to synthesize the progress each of the industries have made on meeting the President's challenge of instituting and enforcing rating systems. She has also asked the National Campaign Against Youth Violence, a campaign that was designed and launched by the President and First Lady, to help her convene leaders in the media and entertainment industry to come together for a working session to brainstorm on working toward one voluntary uniform rating system.

The First Lady has a clear track record on pushing the entertainment industry to develop rating systems. She has publicly spoken out against the gratuitous violence in all forms of media and, with the President, has continually challenged the entertainment industry to do more. On June 1, 1999, at a Rose Garden event on children, violence, and marketing, the First Lady called for actions that would help parents express authority over the media that their children are exposed to. In December, Mrs. Clinton challenged the entire media and entertainment industry to being working towards a voluntary uniform rating system.

Q: What will the Administration do to work with the various industries to develop and implement a uniform rating system?

A: The President has asked the First Lady to work with the National Campaign to convene a meeting of entertainment and media industry representatives to begin discussing the possibility of voluntarily developing and implementing a uniform system.

Q: Does the Administration support the McCain/Lieberman bill, "Media Violence Rating Act of 1999" that they introduced in June 1999?

A: The President and the First Lady applaud Senators Lieberman and McCain for their leadership on this issue, but believe that a uniform rating system should be voluntarily developed and implemented by the industry not by the Federal government.

Q: How have the various media and entertainment industries responded to President Clinton's previous challenges?

A: In his SOTU, the President (will) applaud the industry for the hard work they have done to meet his challenges to develop, implement, and enforce rating systems that include warnings on content and age appropriateness. But, he will also recognize that these systems have become quite complicated for parents and are not easily enforceable. President Clinton has continually stated that the industry must do more. A call for a

voluntary uniform rating system is in line with his challenges. (For more detailed information on responses to specific challenges, see attached sheet).

Q: Last year, the President announced that the FTC would be working with the Justice Department on a study to evaluate the marketing of sex and violence to children and that the study would include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the ratings systems. Wouldn't it be better for the President to first know if these new ratings systems are working before advocating an entirely new system?

A: The President is looking forward to reviewing this independent report which the FTC expects to complete by the end of the year. He does not, however, believe that we should wait for the report to be completed before beginning a discussion about simplifying the current system to make ratings more accessible and easily understandable for parents.

Q: The industry has criticized the President and the FTC for the intrusiveness and the expense of the FTC report. If the President is not going to use it to develop an alternative rating system, is it really worth all the expense?

A: This report will inform industry representatives, parents, and policy makers about the extent of the problem that exists both in terms of marketing to children, as well as the effectiveness and enforceability of the rating systems. It will be critical as we move forward in developing and implementing both a simplified system, as well as better understand how to take care in marketing products to children.

UPDATE ON RESPONSE TO PRESIDENT'S CHALLENGES TO THE MEDIA AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES

FTC Report:

Challenge: The President called for the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Justice Department to jointly study the marketing of violence to children and, specifically, to evaluate the various rating systems.

Response: The FTC report will also evaluate the issue of enforceability of movie ratings. The FTC plans to complete the report by the fall of 2000.

Movies:

The President made a number of challenges to the motion picture industry.

Challenge #1: First, he challenged theater and video store owners to enforce more strictly the ratings systems on the movies they show, rent, and sell – a challenge that the theater owners accepted.

Response: The National Association of Theater Owners (NATO) accepted this challenge and has been working to promote enforcement of the ratings by disseminating information to its members on the importance of checking ID's, and contacting sellers or theaters when informed of a break with policy. NATO has had on-going consultations with educational associations such as the PTA to develop ways to better educate parents

Challenge #2: The President has challenged the whole industry to stop showing guns in any ads or previews children might see.

Response: The MPAA has since implemented a policy of heightened scrutiny on movie advertisements.

Challenge #3: The President challenged the movie industry to reevaluate its entire ratings systems, especially the PG rating, to determine whether it is allowing too much gratuitous violence in movies approved for viewing by children.

Response: At this point, we are not sure how far the industry has come to meet this challenge, but the FTC is including an evaluation of the movie industry ratings system in its report.

Television:

Challenge #1: The President fought for legislation that requires the V-Chip to be installed in all new television sets sold beginning January 1, 2000.

Response: This goal was accomplished on time so that all new televisions produced now are installed with the V-Chip. The technology of the V-Chip is based on the television ratings system

already developed and currently in use by the television industry. V-Chip is technology built into a TV set that "reads" the rating for a particular TV program and is used by parents to block out programs with these ratings. Currently, all programs on the broadcast networks are rated and encoded for V-Chip use (TV7, TV14, etc.), and all the networks, excluding NBC, use content descriptions in their ratings as well (S,V,L, etc.). Additionally, all cable channels, excluding the Black Entertainment Network (BET), encode their programming with the V-Chip ratings.

Challenge #2: In order to promote awareness and give parents tools they need to effectively use the V-Chip, the President called for two new initiatives to make sure the V-Chip becomes a useful tool for parents: the establishment of a V-Chip Task Force to ensure that the V-Chip law is implemented effectively and a major public awareness campaign about the V-Chip.

Response: The FCC established the V-Chip task force to: (1) ensure the V-Chip requirement is enforced; (2) promote parental awareness about the V-Chip; (3) encourage adoption of a standard label identifying television sets that contain the V-Chip; (4) study the use of the V-Chip; and evaluate the effectiveness of the industry's ratings system.

In addition, all four major networks have agreed to run PSAs on the V-Chip and the Kaiser Family Foundation in partnership with the Center for Media Education have produced a free booklet for parents on how the V-Chip works.

Computer Games:

Challenge: The President has also challenged the video game industry to widely inform the public of its ratings and enforce the ratings at the point of sale.

Response: In 1994, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) established an independent board, the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) to develop and implement ratings for computer software. These ratings provide the most extensive and comprehensive ratings of any in the system and have been applauded by Senator Lieberman for their comprehensive nature. Recently, the IDSA accepted the President's challenge and worked with ESRB to set tough standards in advertising to ensure that video game software makers are providing appropriate, responsible, truthful, and accurate advertising.

The industry also has developed guides for parents to be able to more effectively use the ratings on video games and has distributed these guides at the counter of video game stores over the holiday season. And, the industry has created a point-of-sale system to remind clerks to ask for identification from buyers to ensure that stores are not selling adult-rated games to minors.

Internet:

Challenge: The Administration has been actively working to encourage the Internet industry to self-regulate and to help give parents the tools they need to protect their children from inappropriate material.

Response: The Administration has worked with the Internet industry to encourage the 25 largest Internet providers to develop a comprehensive resource for parents. These companies developed "getnetwise" – a one-stop site where parents and teachers can learn how to provide kids with a safe, educational, and entertaining and age-appropriate online experience. Through this web site, parents can access more than 80 technologies that allow them to monitor the amount of time their child spends on the Internet, and provide them with tools to block inappropriate information, as well as links to report troubling or illegal material.

A number of large companies on the Internet have begun to use the ratings system for their products. One example is America On-Line which recently announced that it will require all games played on the AOL service to be rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), and will work with others in the industry to press for wide adoption of game ratings across the Internet. Games which are rated adults-only or which are not rated will not be available for play on the AOL service. Beyond.com, CNET and eToys joined AOL in this announcement and have agreed that any games in their inventory which have been rated by the ESRB will have their ESRB rating prominently displayed wherever they are sold. Additionally, Amazon.com uses ratings on the music, DVDs and games sold on its web site.