

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
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Groups Urge Ad Agencies Not to Advertise on CNN Student News

Commercial Alert and opponents of commercialism in schools sent letters today to the chief executive officers of the top 50 U.S. advertising agencies, asking them not to advertise on CNN Student News, formerly known as CNN Newsroom. The letters were endorsed by Ralph Nader, Consumers Union and Phyllis Schlafly, among others.

CNN Student News is shown in about 18,000 schools each schoolday. Ted Turner launched the program in 1989 as a non-commercial news source for schools. This month, AOL Time Warner is expected to put ads on the program for the first time, according to company sources.

Following is the text of the letter to Steve Blamer, president of Grey Worldwide advertising agency.

Dear Mr. Blamer:

We write to request that Grey Worldwide not place advertising on the program CNN Student News, formerly known as CNN Newsroom.

Ted Turner intended CNN Newsroom to be a commercial-free news service for schools. In 1989, Mr. Turner promised "There will be no advertising whatsoever" on the program. However, following a change in executive leadership, AOL Time Warner has decided to add commercial "sponsorships" to the program. Commercials are expected to debut this month, according to company sources.

At that time, schools and teachers that show CNN Student News will be forcing captive audiences of students to watch commercial advertising during class time. The program is shown during class time in about 18,000 schools.

The use of class time for marketing is wrong and indefensible. Class time should be used for teaching and learning – not selling. It is wrong for corporations to deprive students of valuable class time. Nor should taxpayer funds subsidize advertising to schoolchildren. We hope you agree that the education of our nation's children is far more important than the delivery of commercial messages.

Several companies that have injected commercialism into the schools have come to suffer for it. For example, the ZapMe! Corp. was restructured and renamed because of public humiliation and parent rage at their advertising and privacy invasion of schoolchildren in classrooms. They have now exited the “education business.” N2H2 Inc. was forced to halt their advertising and privacy invasion schemes as well, following parent anger and negative media coverage. Primedia’s Channel One is increasingly becoming a corporate pariah. Unfortunately, AOL Time Warner seems slow to grasp the import of this history, and is set on having CNN Student News repeat these mistakes.

The commercialization of schools is a widening flashpoint for more and more parents across the country. If Grey Worldwide places ads on CNN Student News, then it and its client may find themselves facing negative publicity and indignant taxpayers and parents.

If you have any questions about this letter, please contact Jim Metrock of Obligation Inc. at (205) 612-3376 or Gary Ruskin of Commercial Alert at (503) 235-8012.

Sincerely,

Enola Aird, Director, The Motherhood Project, Institute for American Values

Peter Barnes, Co-founder, Working Assets

Charles W. F. Bell, Programs Director, Consumers Union

David Bollier, author, *Silent Theft*

John Borowski

David Bosworth, Associate Professor of English, University of Washington

Michael Brody, Adjunct Professor, University of Maryland

Bettye Caldwell, Professor Emerita, University of Arkansas for Medical Sciences

Nancy Carlsson-Paige, Professor of Education, Lesley University

Peter DeBenedittis

Charles Derber, Professor of Sociology, Boston College

Jonah Edelman, Executive Director, Stand for Children

Leon Eisenberg, Professor of Psychiatry Emeritus, Harvard Medical School

Roy F. Fox, Professor and Chair, Department of Middle & Secondary Education, U. of MO-Columbia; author, *Harvesting Minds and MediaSpeak*

Todd Gitlin, Professor of Culture, Journalism and Sociology, New York University; author, *Media Unlimited*

Mark Hickson, Professor and Chair, Department of Communication Studies, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Carol Holst, Program Director, Seeds of Simplicity

Michael Jacobson, founder, Center for the Study of Commercialism; co-author, *Marketing Madness*

Sut Jhally, Founder and Executive Director, The Media Education Foundation
Carden Johnston, Chairman, Task Force Against Commercialism in the Classroom, Alabama Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics
Joe Kelly, Executive Director, Dads and Daughters; Publisher, Daughters: The Newsletter for Parents of Girls
Jean Kilbourne, author, *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*
Naomi Klein, author, *No Logo*
Velma LaPoint, Associate Professor of Human Development, Howard University
Diane Levin, Professor of Education, Wheelock College
Jane Levine, Founder, Kids Can Make A Difference
Susan Linn, Judge Baker Children's Center; Instructor in Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School
Dana Mack, author, *The Assault on Parenthood*
Bob McCannon, Executive Director, New Mexico Media Literacy Project
Robert McChesney, Research Associate Professor, U. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; author, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*
Bill McKibben, author, *The End of Nature and The Age of Missing Information*
Carrie McLaren, Editor, Stay Free! Magazine
Michael Mendizza, Co-founder, Touch The Future
Jim Metrock, President, Obligation, Inc.
Alex Molnar, Professor And Director, Education Policy Studies Laboratory, Arizona State University
Mark Crispin Miller, Professor of Media Ecology, New York University
Diane M. Morrison, Research Professor & Associate Dean for Research, University of Washington School of Social Work
Peggy O'Mara, Editor and Publisher, Mothering Magazine
Ralph Nader
Alvin F. Poussaint, Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School
Raffi, the children's troubadour, Founder and Chair, Troubadour Institute for Child-Honoring
Susan Rogers, Founder and Publisher, Medialiteracy.com
Jonathan Rowe, writer
Douglas Rushkoff, Professor of Virtual Culture, New York University; author, *Coercion and Media Virus*
Gary Ruskin, Executive Director, Commercial Alert
Diane Samples, Director, Media Knowledge, Inc.
Phyllis Schlafly, President, Eagle Forum
Tamara Sobel, Project Director, The Girls, Women and Media Project
John Stauber, co-author, *Trust Us, We're Experts* and *Toxic Sludge is Good for You*
Bill Talen, creator of "Reverend Billy and The Church of Stop Shopping"
Vermont Media Action Coalition
Donald E. Wildmon, President, American Family Association, Inc.

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Background information on CNN Student News is available at:
<<http://www.commercialalert.org/cnn/index.html>>.

Commercial Alert's mission is to keep the commercial culture within its proper sphere, and to prevent it from exploiting children and subverting the higher values of family, community, environmental integrity and democracy. Commercial Alert's website is at <<http://www.commercialalert.org>>.