

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
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Groups Ask States to Investigate Channel One's Payments to School Employees

Commercial Alert and Obligation Inc. sent letters today to state officials in all 50 states requesting an investigation of an offer by Channel One, an in-school marketing company, to pay \$500 to public school employees in exchange for convincing a school principal to enter into a contract to receive Channel One's product.

The groups, which oppose the commercialization of schools, sent the letters to state attorneys general and chief state school officers in all 50 states, as well as to the heads of state ethics agencies. As an example, following is the letter to Massachusetts Attorney General Tom Reilly.

Dear Attorney General Reilly:

This letter is a formal request for an investigation of the "Share It Program" conducted by Channel One Communications Corporation ("Channel One"), a school-based marketing company owned by Primedia Inc. Through this program, Channel One is offering \$500 to public school employees in the State of Massachusetts for convincing a school principal to enter into a contract to receive the Channel One service.

In effect, Channel One is hiring Massachusetts's public school employees to promote its controversial product. This is a conflict of interest for school employees. Public employment is a public trust -- which is violated when employees use their public positions for private gain. Public school employees should not act as paid agents of private corporations. It is not the proper role of public school employees to be a roving sales team for Channel One's efforts to commercialize the schools. Such activities are wholly inconsistent with the conscientious performance of school employees' duties to the taxpayers who pay their salaries.

We urge you to determine whether state ethics laws and rules -- especially those related to conflicts of interest or outside earned income -- allow Channel One to pay public school employees to use the color of their public position for private gain. If such payments do violate state ethics rules or law, then we urge you to investigate Channel One, and to identify and take all appropriate action against every public school employee in the State of Massachusetts whom Channel One has paid.

If you have any questions about this matter, or want more information, please call Jim Metrock at 205.612.3376 or Gary Ruskin at 503.235.8012.

Sincerely,

Jim Metrock, President, Obligation, Inc.

Gary Ruskin, Executive Director, Commercial Alert

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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. For more information, see Commercial Alert's website at <<http://www.commercialalert.org>>.

Obligation's mission is to remind businesses and governments of their responsibility to children. For more information, see Obligation's website at <<http://www.obligation.org/>>.