

NEWS RELEASE

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Coalition Wants Companies to Stop Advertising on Channel One

A broad coalition of conservative, progressive and family organizations sent letters today urging companies to cease advertising on Channel One because of its adverse effects on children, schools and taxpayers.

Channel One is a marketing company that delivers advertising to children in schools. Though Channel One packages itself as a "news and educational" company, it boasts to potential advertisers that it is "viewed by more teens than any other program on television." Each school day, Channel One broadcasts two minutes of commercials and ten minutes of "news" programming to about eight million students in 12,000 schools across the country.

The letters explain that companies should not advertise on Channel One, and that Channel One does not belong in schools, because Channel One: uses schools to force children to watch ads, wastes valuable school time and taxes spent on schools, and that Channel One -- not parents or school boards -- selects its ads and program content.

Signatories to the letters include: American Family Association, Association of Black Psychologists, Center for a New American Dream, Center for Reclaiming America, Citizens' Campaign for Commercial-Free Schools, Commercial Alert, Eagle Forum, Family Research Council, Focus on the Family, National Institute on Media and the Family, New Mexico Media Literacy Project, Obligation Inc., Seeds of Simplicity, TV-Free America, and the Waldorf Early Childhood Association of North America.

Corporations receiving the letter include: Proctor & Gamble; Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company; SmithKline Beecham Consumer Healthcare; Philips Electronics North America Corporation; Warner Bros. Television, Inc; The Walt Disney Company; M&M/Mars; S.C. Johnson & Son, Limited; RJR Nabisco Holdings Corp.; Kellogg Company; Konami Corporation of America Inc.; JC Penney Company, Inc.; PepsiCo, Inc.; Helene Curtis Business Units; Hasbro, Inc.; Warner-Lambert Company; and Blockbuster Entertainment Corp.

Following is the text of the letter sent to Durk I. Jager, President, Chief Executive Officer & Chief Operating Officer of Proctor & Gamble.

Dear Mr. Jager:

We request that Proctor & Gamble remove all advertising from Channel One.

Channel One is a marketing company that delivers advertising to children in schools. Each school day, Channel One broadcasts two minutes of commercials and ten minutes of "news" programming to more than eight million students in 12,000 schools across the country.

Currently, Proctor & Gamble advertises Pringles, Clearasil, and Noxema on Channel One.

Proctor & Gamble's advertising dollars provide some of the financial resources which allow Channel One to continue to exist. We regret Proctor & Gamble's decision to support Channel One, and hope you will reconsider this decision.

We believe that Channel One does not belong in schools for four main reasons.

- 1. Channel One forces children to watch ads.** Joel Babbit, then-president of Channel One, explained in 1994 why advertisers like it: "The biggest selling point to advertisers [is] . . . we are forcing kids to watch two minutes of commercials." Channel One turns schoolchildren into captive ad watchers. Schools should not impose advertising on children, nor should corporations be allowed to use schools as a vehicle for their commercial messages without informed parental consent.
- 2. Channel One wastes valuable time in schools.** A 1997 study found that the content of Channel One's "news" programming was shallow. In schools that show Channel One, students spend the equivalent of one full week each school year watching Channel One, including nearly one class day watching ads. Schools are for learning, not for watching ads or drivel.
- 3. Channel One wastes tax dollars spent on schools.** One recent study concluded that Channel One's cost to taxpayers in lost class time is \$1.8 billion per year. Taxpayers should not be subsidizing the delivery of advertising to children in schools.
- 4. Channel One -- not parents or school boards -- decides its ads and program content.** Channel One takes control over children's experiences away from parents. We want parents to choose who may affect their children's lives, not Channel One.

We have recently asked three congressional committees (Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation; Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources; and House Committee on Education and the Workforce) to conduct hearings on the effects of Channel One on children, schools and taxpayers. If congressional hearings occur, we will likely direct congressional attention to the companies that advertise on Channel One.

We are resolutely opposed to the presence of Channel One in schools, and expect to criticize Channel One in the future. We are also considering, among other activities, public criticism of companies that advertise on Channel One.

Channel One is a highly controversial way to advertise to children. We strongly urge you not to associate Proctor & Gamble with the controversy and negative publicity surrounding Channel One. We hope you will refrain from advertising on Channel One in the future.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Gary Ruskin of Commercial Alert at (202) 296-2787, Steven Schwalm of Family Research Council at (202) 393-2100, or Jim Metrock of Obligation, Inc. at (205) 822-0080.

