

Commercial Alert
1611 Connecticut Ave. NW Suite #3A
Washington, DC 20009
202.296.2787 Phone C 202.833.2406 Fax
www.essential.org/alert C alert@essential.org

October 18, 2000

The Honorable Bob Taft
Governor
State of Ohio
Office of the Governor
77 S. High Street, 30th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215
via telecopier (614) 466-9354

Dear Governor Taft:

Local school officials are using Ohio's compulsory education laws to force children to watch commercial television and advertising in school, including the controversial marketing program Channel One. We urge you to take a stand for children and stop this abuse of the authority of the state.

According to the *Toledo Blade*, two Ohio children, D.J. and Carlotta Maurer, spent October 6th in the Wood County Juvenile Detention Center because they refused to watch Channel One and other televised programming at Perrysburg Junior High School. They refused because they choose not to take in the degraded commercial culture that Channel One and media corporations deliver to children each day.

Channel One does not exist to help or teach kids. It exists to help corporations that want to market to kids. As a Channel One executive once said, "The biggest selling point to advertisers [is] . . . we are forcing kids to watch two minutes of commercials" each day.

Ohio's compulsory education laws exist for the nurture of children, not their exploitation. But Primedia's Channel One has been able to harness the coercive arm of the State of Ohio to force schoolchildren to watch its daily fare. This includes "lite" news and advertisements for violent entertainment such as "Supernova," "The Mummy," and James Bond "The World is Not Enough," as well as junk food, video games and low-grade sensuality. That is a blatant misuse of state power. It is not the proper role of the schools or the state to promote such products and values to innocent and vulnerable schoolchildren. Certainly, the laws of the state should never be used to compel children to subject themselves to such promotion. When the government sends children to a juvenile detention center because they don't want to watch advertising, that is both Orwellian and more than a little sick.

The public schools ought to be a sanctuary from the noxious aspects of the commercial culture. Many parents are rightly worried about the way the commercial culture saturates their kids lives with degraded values and nonstop seductions.

We strongly urge you to take a stand for parents and remove Channel One from Ohio's

public schools. This would be a clarion call for those parents who wish their children to grow up free from the depredations and enticements of the media corporations and their advertisers.

Sincerely,

Gary Ruskin, Director, Commercial Alert
Jim Metrock, President, Obligation, Inc.