

NEWS RELEASE

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Coalition Wants Hearings on Adverse Effects of Channel One on Children, Schools and Taxpayers

A coalition of conservative and progressive organizations, and academics sent letters today to the chairmen and ranking minority members of three congressional committees calling for hearings on the effects of Channel One on children, schools and taxpayers.

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 classrooms across the country.

Signatories to the letters include: American Family Association, Association of Black Psychologists, Christian Family Network, Commercial Alert, Eagle Forum, Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR), Family First, Inc., Family Research Council, New Mexico Media Literacy Project, Obligation, Inc., Traditional Values Coalition, TV-Free America, Brita Butler-Wall, William Hoynes, Mark Crispin Miller, Alex Molnar, and Ralph Nader.

The coalition sent letters to the chairmen and ranking minority members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation; Senate Committee on Labor and Human Resources; and House Committee on Education and the Workforce.

Following is the text of the letter sent to Senator John McCain, Chairman of the Senate Commerce Committee:

Dear Chairman McCain:

We are writing to request that the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation hold public informational hearings about the effects of Channel One on children, schools and taxpayers.

Channel One is a marketing company that delivers advertising to children in schools. It is owned by Primedia Inc., which is a property of Kohlberg, Kravis & Roberts (KKR).

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 classrooms across the country.

We are concerned about the adverse effects of Channel One on children for four main reasons.

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.

1. **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.
1. **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.
1. **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 hope that the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation will conduct hearings and a thorough investigation of how Channel One affects children, schools and taxpayers.

Sincerely,

American Family Association
Association of Black Psychologists
Christian Family Network
Commercial Alert
Eagle Forum
Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)
Family First, Inc.
Family Research Council
New Mexico Media Literacy Project
Obligation, Inc.
Traditional Values Coalition
TV-Free America

Brita Butler-Wall, Visiting Assistant Professor, School of Education, Seattle University
William Hoynes, Associate Professor of Sociology, Vassar College
Mark Crispin Miller, Professor of Media Studies, New York University
Alex Molnar, Professor of Education, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee
Ralph Nader