

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release:
Friday, November 3, 2000

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Child Advocates Want Ad-Free Internet Filters For Schools

A coalition of child advocates and academics sent letters today to President Clinton, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) and other key Members of Congress asking that federally mandated Internet filters in schools and libraries be prohibited from carrying advertising. The letter states that "An effort to protect kids from pornography should not be the occasion to open them up to commercial predators."

The letters were sent to President Bill Clinton; Senators John McCain, Rick Santorum (R-PA) and Richard Shelby (R-AL); and Representative Ernest Istook (R-OK). The letter to Senator McCain follows.

Dear Chairman McCain:

We want to alert you to an unintended consequence of the mandatory software filter provision currently attached to the fiscal year 2001 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill. Corporations might use such mandated software filters to deliver advertising to captive audiences of impressionable schoolchildren. An effort to protect kids from pornography should not be the occasion to open them up to commercial predators. We urge you to ensure that any mandatory software filter provision for schools and libraries that receive federal technology funds also prohibits that filtering program from acting as an advertising delivery mechanism.

Schools are for learning, not selling. But some companies use Internet filters to deliver advertising to children. For example, N2H2 tells advertisers to "Own the education desktop by reaching teens and tweens where they learn the most -- the classroom. N2H2 is the leader in filtering Internet content for schools all across the United States. In doing so, we reach over 13.5 million* students who view 4 billion online pages a year. And our sponsorship and advertising opportunities let you be a part of every Web page they explore." N2H2 tells advertisers that they can "tailor a comprehensive program that drives your corporate and brand loyalty initiatives through scholastically-focused activities."

The unintended consequence of promoting advertising in the public schools would be easily fixed by including language that prohibits such federally mandated Internet software filters from delivering advertisements.

If you have any questions about this letter, or want to discuss how to amend the mandatory software filter provision, please call Gary Ruskin of Commercial Alert at (202) 296-2787, or Jim Metrock of Obligation, Inc. at (205) 612-3376 or Andrew Hagelshaw of the Center for Commercial-free Public Education at (510) 268-1100.

Sincerely,

Brita Butler-Wall, author, *A Parent's Guide to Commercialism in Schools*

Jason Catlett, President, Junkbusters Corp.

Colleen Cordes, Co-Coordinator, Task Force on Computers in Childhood, Alliance for Childhood

George Gerbner, President and Founder, Cultural Environment Movement; Dean Emeritus, Annenberg School of Communication

Andrew Hagelshaw, Executive Director, Center for Commercial-Free Public Education

Velma LaPoint, Associate Professor of Human Development, Howard University

Diane Levin, Professor of Education, Wheelock College; author, *Remote Control Childhood*

Carden Johnston, MD, FAAP, FACEP, FRCP; Past President, Alabama Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics

Robert McChesney, Research Associate Professor, U. of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign; author, *Rich Media, Poor Democracy*

Jim Metrock, President, Obligation, Inc.

Mark Crispin Miller, Professor of Media Ecology, New York University

Gary Ruskin, Director, Commercial Alert

Juliet Schor, Senior Lecturer on Women's Studies, Harvard University; author, *The Overspent American*

Nancy Willard, Project Director, Center for Advanced Technology in Education, University of Oregon

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Commercial Alert opposes corporate exploitation of children and the excesses of commercialism, advertising and marketing. Commercial Alert's web address is <<http://www.essential.org/alert/>>.