

# NEWS RELEASE

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For More Information Contact:  
Commercial Alert: Gary Ruskin (202) 296-2787  
Obligation, Inc.: Jim Metrock (205) 612-3376

## **Groups Question Education Nominee's Record on School Commercialism**

Commercial Alert and child advocates sent letters today to Members of the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, expressing concern that Roderick Paige, President-elect George W. Bush's nominee as Secretary of Education, "may not understand the importance of protecting children from in-school commercial advertising and marketing." The letter asks the Senators to "tell Mr. Paige that corporate advertising is not education and America's schoolchildren should not be for sale." The letter follows.

Dear Senator:

We write to express our concern that Roderick Paige, nominee for Secretary of Education, may not understand the importance of protecting children from in-school commercial advertising and marketing.

Dr. Paige's record on this issue should be no comfort to parents. Last year, during his tenure as Superintendent of the Houston Independent School District (HISD), the HISD agreed to an exclusive marketing deal with Coca-Cola. He also allowed the controversial in-school marketing company Channel One to operate in some of Houston's public schools. We believe this shows some confusion about the purpose of the public schools.

Schools are for learning, not selling. But, regrettably, the commercial presence in the schools is rising. "In-school marketing has become a growing industry," according to a report by the General Accounting Office. "Some marketing professionals are increasingly targeting children in school, companies are becoming known for their success in negotiating contracts between school districts and beverage companies, and both educators and corporate managers are attending conferences to learn how to increase revenue from in-school marketing for their schools and companies."

In recent months, Philip Morris Inc. distributed millions of textbook covers to schoolchildren perhaps in an effort to lure them to smoke tobacco. Coca-Cola Co. and PepsiCo aggressively use the public schools to promote soda pop, which, if consumed in excessive amounts may contribute to obesity, tooth decay, osteoporosis, heart disease and kidney stones, according to "Liquid Candy: How Soft Drinks are Harming Americans' Health," a report by the Center for Science in the Public Interest. Primedia's Channel One uses the schools to promote violent and sexualized movies, video games, junk food, fast food and expensive sneakers, to captive audiences of about eight million schoolchildren. For example, on December 8, Channel One promoted the movie "Dude, Where's My Car?," which glorifies the sexual fantasies and drug use of two pot-heads who party so wildly that they can't remember anything about the night before.

We urge you to inquire thoroughly about Dr. Paige's views on such marketing to schoolchildren. For example, does Dr. Paige believe that it was appropriate to use school time and taxpayer funds to promote "Dude, Where's My Car?" to Houston schoolchildren and other children across the country? What, exactly, are his views on the use of the public schools to promote soda

pop, junk food and bad nutrition at a time when our children are suffering from sharp increases in obesity and Type 2 diabetes?

After inquiring of his views, we urge you to tell Dr. Paige that corporate advertising is not education and America's schoolchildren should not be for sale.

Sincerely,

Enola G. Aird, Director, Motherhood Project, Institute for American Values  
Brita Butler-Wall, former Chair, Washington State PTA Committee on Commercial Influences on Children in School  
Ronnie Cummins, National Campaign Director, Organic Consumers Association  
Jane M. Healy, PhD, author, *Failure to Connect*  
Michael F. Jacobson, co-author, *Marketing Madness*  
Sut Jhally, Founder and Executive Director, The Media Education Foundation  
Carden Johnston, MD, FAAP, Chair, Task Force on Commercialism in Public Schools, Alabama Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics  
Jean Kilbourne, author, *Deadly Persuasion*  
Velma LaPoint, PhD, Associate Professor of Human Development, Howard University  
Diane Levin, Professor of Education, Wheelock College; author, *Remote Control Childhood*  
Susan Linn, EdD, Associate Director, Media Center of the Judge Baker Children's Center  
Dana Mack, Director, Childhood and Adolescence Project, Institute for American Values; author, *The Assault on Parenthood*  
Bob McCannon, Executive Director, New Mexico Media Literacy Project  
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  
Diane Morrison, PhD, Research Professor, School of Social Work, University of Washington  
Alvin F. Poussaint, MD, Director of the Media Center, Judge Baker Children's Center, Professor of Psychiatry, Harvard Medical School  
Gary Ruskin, Director, Commercial Alert  
Inger Stole, Assistant Professor, Dept. of Advertising, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Betsy Taylor, Executive Director, Center for a New American Dream  
David Wall, President, Citizens' Campaign for Commercial-Free Schools, Seattle, WA  
David Walsh, PhD, President, National Institute on Media and the Family

<----letter ends here----> Coca-Cola and PepsiCo are major political donors. Most recently, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, PepsiCo chairman and CEO Roger Enrico gave \$200,000 to the Bush-Cheney 2001 Presidential Inaugural Committee, while Coca-Cola vice-president Barclay T. Resler gave \$100,000.

Commercial Alert opposes the excesses of commercialism, advertising and marketing. Commercial Alert's website is at <<http://www.commercialalert.org/>>.