

AA KANSAS CITY

INTERACTIVE DIGITAL SOFTWARE ASSOCIATION

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TO: Anne O'Leary
FROM: Alec French

DATE: 10/14/99 456-2878

PAGES (including cover): 12-

RE:

Info on IDSA proactive efforts
COMMENTS:

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Proactive Steps By Entertainment Software Companies To Address Concerns About Violent Content

While the vast majority of video and computer games are appropriate for persons of all ages, and while the majority of the most frequent game players are adults, the industry has long recognized that some products do contain significant levels of violent content that are not appropriate for younger audiences. Over the years, the industry association, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), has taken significant and meaningful self-regulatory steps to ensure that consumers can make informed purchasing decisions. Following is a summary of voluntary activities we've undertaken.

1994-1997

- In 1994, the IDSA established the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB). ESRB raters, with no ties to industry, generate independent, credible, and reliable ratings to help consumers make informed purchasing decisions. Uniquely, ESRB ratings, which appear both on game packaging and on the games themselves, cover both the age appropriateness of a title and carry phrases describing the content of many games. Though voluntary, compliance with the ratings system is nearly 100%, and the few games that do not carry ratings are educational titles lacking controversial content. Senator Joe Lieberman (D-CT) consistently calls the ESRB "the most comprehensive entertainment ratings system in the country." To date, over 5,800 products have been rated by the ESRB.
- In 1994, IDSA voluntarily created an Advertising Code of Conduct requiring that ratings and content information issued by ESRB be placed on packaging. The Ad Code also established rules for use of ratings information in advertisements and other forms of consumer marketing.
- In 1997, recognizing the emergence of the Internet, the ESRB launched a new rating service called ESRB Interactive, or ESRBi. Through this service, ESRB offers companies the opportunity to rate their websites and video games distributed on line.

1999

- The ESRB, in cooperation with the IDSA, recently launched a major promotional campaign to educate parents about the ESRB. This promotional campaign includes purchase of advertising in major national publications targeted at parents, placement of ESRB pull-out flyers in major parent-oriented publications, such as Child Magazine, production of a PSA, to be offered to networks and cable TV stations, promoting the use of the ESRB ratings featuring a nationally known sports celebrity, redesigned consumer brochures and the production of millions of copies for use by leading national retailers at the point of sale, and outreach to leading national grassroots organizations with ties to schools and parents seeking ways to partner with them to get the word out to consumers, especially parents, about ESRB ratings and how to use them.
- The IDSA has sent letters to major national retailers seeking their commitments to educate consumers about the ESRB ratings and to make a commitment to consumers to use their best efforts not to sell Mature rated games to persons under 17. Already, several have agreed to sign this commitment and we expect to announce these shortly. In this regard,

Toys 'R Us, working with the ESRB, is rolling out in more than 700 stores nationwide, posters and brochures that explain the ESRB ratings. In addition, Toys "R" Us has advised us that it will not sell "Mature" rated software to customers under the age of 17, unless accompanied by an adult and that it has moved all of its "M" rated software packages and games to the top tier of the software display so that small children cannot mistakenly access it.

- On September 29, 1999, the IDSA Board of Directors took the extraordinary and far reaching step of creating an Advertising Review Council (ARC) within the ESRB. The ARC is empowered to ensure that all advertisements by those who use ESRB ratings adhere to strict content standards covering such areas as violence, sex, and language. In addition, to enhance ad code enforcement, the IDSA has shifted this responsibility to the new ESRB ad unit. This is a major self-regulatory initiative to address concerns about the appropriateness of the content of certain video game ads.
- On September 21, 1999, the three U.S. manufacturers of video game consoles, Nintendo of America, Sony Computer Entertainment America, and Sega of America, all announced that they would package ESRB information with each video game console. As a result, the 5-10 million new buyers of video game console hardware this holiday season will have ratings information in their hands.
- Entertainment software publishers are working with Microsoft to incorporate a password-protected functionality within the Windows 2000 operating system that would allow parents to ensure that Mature-rated games cannot be played on their computer.
- As a result of discussions which began at the White House Summit on Violence, the IDSA and ESRB are in advanced discussions with a major Internet service provider to utilize ESRB ratings on the Internet.
- Several entertainment software publishers have taken a number of actions on an individual basis to respond to concerns about violent games. For instance, Interplay incorporated a filter within its game "Kingpin" which allows a parent to control the amount of violence in the game.

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For Immediate Release
October 13, 1999*Tiger works IDSA***Contact: Dan Sweet**
(202) 739-0221**IDSA**
NEWS

ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE GROUP CREATES INDEPENDENT COUNCIL TO OVERSEE VIDEO GAME ADVERTISING

LEADING VIDEO GAME MAGAZINES ADOPT INDUSTRY STANDARDS

Washington, D.C. – The Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) announced today the creation of an Advertising Review Council (ARC) to ensure that advertisements placed by U.S. computer and video game software makers are appropriate, responsible, truthful and accurate.

The new ad unit will become a division of the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), the widely-praised organization created by the video game industry in 1994 to independently rate video games for age appropriateness and content. ESRB will monitor and enforce the new advertising principles and guidelines.

In announcing the major new self-regulatory initiative, the IDSA also disclosed that the leading game enthusiast magazine publishers have agreed to adopt and implement the new advertising Principles and Guidelines.

"The creation of ARC is a far reaching initiative to ensure that video games are marketed appropriately to all audiences," said Doug Lowenstein, President of the IDSA. "Our goal in developing this advertising review council is to strike a balance between preserving creative freedom and meeting our responsibilities to consumers."

The Advertising Review Council was founded on four key principles, and will hold video games manufacturers accountable if it is determined that any advertising or promotion of a video game violates any one of these principles. These principles are:

- An advertisement should accurately reflect the nature and content of the product it represents and the rating issued (i.e., an advertisement should not mislead the consumer as to the product's true character.)

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- All advertisements should be created with a sense of responsibility to the public.
- No advertisement should contain content likely to cause serious or widespread offense to the average consumer.

In addition to the core Principles, ARC has also established specific content guidelines to assist video game companies in creating responsible and accurate advertising. These Guidelines cover visual, written, or spoken content that is violent or sexual in nature or content that may contain language, images, or descriptions that could offend individuals or groups of individuals. Among other things, the Guidelines bar misrepresentations regarding the character and/or rating of a product, graphic and/or excessive depiction of violence, graphic and/or violent depiction of the use of weapons, and graphic and/or excessive depiction of nudity.

If a company is found to have violated any principles or guidelines, it will be notified by ARC and asked to adjust its advertising to comply. If it fails to make a bona fide attempt to do so, the company could face a number of sanctions including the revocation of the title's rating, public notice of the violation, referral of the violation to appropriate government agencies, and/or the payment of fines.

"We feel that a video game manufacturer's responsibility does not just end with the content of its product, but extends to the advertising and marketing of that product as well," said Dr. Arthur Pober, Executive Director of the ESRB. "The Advertising Review Council will see to it that video game manufacturers fulfill this broader obligation."

IDSA's Lowenstein said he is especially grateful that the Nation's leading game magazines have embraced the new ad unit. "The decision by the game magazines to adopt the ARC Principles and Guidelines is a critical step towards ensuring prompt and effective implementation of the new industry standards," said Lowenstein. "Their proactive stance demonstrates a strong commitment to their readers."

The publishers who agreed to adopt the ARC standards as their internal codes are: Imagine Media (which publishes Next Generation, PlayStation Magazine, PC Accelerator, PC Games, the Official Dreamcast Magazine, N Gamer, and the Daily Radar.com website); Ziff-Davis (which publishes Computer Gaming World, Electronic Gaming Monthly, the Official US PlayStation Magazine, and Expert Gamer); and IDG Games Media Group (which publishes GamePro Magazine.)

The implementation of ARC principles, guidelines and procedures will be effective starting January 31, 2000.

The IDSA is the U.S. association exclusively dedicated to serving the business and

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public affairs needs of companies that publish video and computer games for video game consoles, personal computers, and the Internet. IDSA members collectively account for more than 90 percent of the \$5.5 billion in entertainment software sales in the United States in 1998, and billions more in export sales of American-made entertainment software. The IDSA offers services to entertainment software publishers including a global anti-piracy program, staging the Electronic Entertainment Expo trade show, business and consumer research, government relations and First Amendment and intellectual property protection efforts.

[Note: Additional information on ARC's Principles and Guidelines is available on the IDSA website at www.idsa.com or by calling Dan Sweet at (202) 739-0221]

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The Advertising Review Council

of the

ESRB

A Summary of the Principles and Guidelines

Introduction

The Entertainment Software Rating Board ("ESRB") is an independent rating system that was established in September of 1994. The Rating Board has been consistently praised by government representatives, educators, advocacy groups, the public, and private industry, and is widely recognized as one of the finest examples of industry-led self-regulation. Currently comprised of three separate divisions—the Rating Board, ESRB*interactive*, and ESRB Privacy Online—the ESRB continues to demonstrate that meaningful self-regulation is the most effective method available for: (i) protecting consumers; and, (ii) fostering high levels of public trust and confidence.

As a result of recent developments regarding the advertising of interactive entertainment software products and the consistency of that advertising with product content ratings, the ESRB, in association with the interactive entertainment software industry, has once again responded with a self-regulatory initiative: the Advertising Review Council of the ESRB ("ARC"). ARC shall be responsible for the implementation, administration, and enforcement of a self-regulatory system of advertising control for the interactive entertainment software industry. The division's objective is to promote the highest standards of advertising and to provide the interactive entertainment software industry with a system of voluntary principles and guidelines that will assure responsible, appropriate, truthful, and accurate advertising with relation to interactive software products and services.

SCOPE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

ARC shall, through its oversight and enforcement authority, analyze and evaluate all qualifying advertising for compliance with the Principles and Guidelines. Such oversight and enforcement may occur through either company initiated prior-reviews, ARC's monitoring and review, or outside complaints and will focus on all qualifying advertising matter.

Principles and Guidelines

The Principles and Guidelines are the foundation of this advertising initiative. ARC will use the Principles and Guidelines to assist companies in providing responsible advertising practices. As explicitly stated within the document, ARC will review advertising for compliance with the Principles and Guidelines in the context of the general public, and the scope and weight of each factor may vary on a case-by-case basis, in accordance with the demographic for which each product and its associated advertising is intended and in relation to the advertising medium involved.

Principles:

- An advertisement should accurately reflect the nature and content of the product it represents and the rating issued (i.e., an advertisement should not mislead the consumer as to the product's true character).
- An advertisement should not glamorize or exploit the ESRB rating of a product (e.g., an advertisement with a tag line that states: "banned by the ESRB" or "a 'T' rating has never been pushed this far," etc.).
- All advertisements should be created with a sense of responsibility towards the public.

No advertisement should contain content likely to cause serious or widespread offense to the average consumer.

Guidelines:

While the Principles describe the scope of ARC's review, the Guidelines are general parameters intended to further assist companies in providing responsible advertising practices. Although these Guidelines are not intended to restrict or impede creative and/or innovative advertising, they are intended to provide a framework for companies to use when developing and implementing their advertising initiatives.

These Guidelines cover visual, written or spoken content that is violent or sexual in nature or content that may contain language, images, or descriptions that could offend individuals or groups of individuals. Among other things, the Guidelines bar misrepresentations regarding the character and/or rating of a product, graphic and/or excessive depiction of violence, graphic and/or violent depiction of the use of weapons, and graphic and/or excessive depiction of nudity.

Complaints and Concerns

Legitimate complaints or concerns regarding a qualifying advertisement or advertising campaign may be submitted to ARC. ARC's general counsel is responsible for initially reviewing the legitimacy of a complaint and will not accept complaints that are determined to be baseless, frivolous, or presented for any improper purpose, or for advertisements that fall outside of ARC's purview.

Investigations and Reviews

Once ARC receives a complaint or concern, an investigation will be undertaken and the advertiser will be given the opportunity to submit a written response to the complaint or concern. All responses must be received within the allotted time period. In the event a response is not submitted in a timely manner, ARC will proceed with the investigation process and decide the issue upon the expiration of the advertiser's time to reply. After the investigation and review is completed, ARC will formulate a determination regarding the complaint at issue and prepare a final case report that will be distributed to all parties involved.

Appeals

Either an advertiser or complainant may appeal to the president of the ESRB for reconsideration of a complaint or concern if either party is not satisfied with the results of the investigation and final determination. Upon receipt of a request for an appeal, the president will appoint a panel of five (5) individuals: one (1) member of the public; one (1) member of the advertising industry; one (1) member of the publishing and/or media industry; and, two (2) members of the interactive software and hardware industry to hear the appeal. A majority of the panel will constitute a quorum, but a concurring vote of three members is required to decide any substantive question before the panel.

Compliance

If ARC determines that: (i) an advertiser is found to have violated the Principles and Guidelines; or, (ii) after reviewing the advertiser's response to a request for a status report; or, (iii) if ARC determines that the advertiser has failed to make a bona fide attempt to bring its advertising into compliance with either ARC's determinations or the Appeal Panel's decision, then ARC may impose a number of penalties including revocation of a rating, publication, and/or the payment of fines.

In the event an action is published, such publication will be in the form of a report and will be made available to the general public, free of charge, posted at regular intervals on ESRB and Interactive Digital Software Associations' websites, and may be distributed in various forms to government entities, political representatives, consumer protection groups, and the media.

Referrals

In the event ARC determines that an advertiser has failed to make a bona fide attempt to bring its advertising into compliance with either ARC's determinations or the Appeal Panel's decision, or the division determines that either a federal law or federal regulation may been violated, then, the division may forward a description of the facts and all correspondence between the division and the parties to an appropriate federal and/or state agency.



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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
SEPTEMBER 21, 1999**

**Contact: Dan Sweet
(202) 739-0221**

IDSA **NEWS**

VIDEO GAME CONSOLE MANUFACTURERS TO PROVIDE RATINGS INFORMATION WITH PURCHASE OF ALL HARDWARE

Washington, D.C. – In an action which will put video game ratings information in the hands of millions of American consumers this holiday season, all three video game console manufacturers jointly announced today that they will start including educational material about the Entertainment Software Rating Board in every unit they ship in the United States.

The commitment by Nintendo of America, Sega of America, and Sony Computer Entertainment America, to include simple background information on the game ratings provided by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) in their hardware packaging is part of a stepped-up effort by the entertainment software industry to ensure that parents choose appropriate games for their children. In 1998, between 6.5 and 7.5 million next generation video game consoles were sold in the September-December period. Industry analysts estimate that this number will be equaled and probably surpassed over the same four months in 1999.

The ratings will be included in the hardware packaging in time for the holiday shopping season. Industry experts expect that millions of game systems will be sold this holiday season.

"The ESRB system, which includes age-related letter ratings and written descriptions of a game's contents, is the most comprehensive ratings system in the entertainment industry," said Douglas Lowenstein, President of the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA), the trade association representing U.S. entertainment software publishers. "This action reflects the industry's continuing commitment to spreading the word about video game ratings."

"I am pleased that Nintendo of America, Sega of America, and Sony Computer Entertainment America have taken this important step to promote the ESRB rating system," said ESRB Executive Director Dr. Arthur Pober. "This means that millions of new video game console owners will know to look for ESRB ratings when buying games for their new systems. The console

manufacturers have taken an important step to ensure that America's parents know both about ESRB ratings and how to use them."

The console manufacturers will place the information about the ratings system in each package, either in the hardware manuals or on a separate informational card or flyer.

"Nintendo is committed to providing parents with the best possible information, while creating top-quality, family fun," said Howard Lincoln, chairman of Nintendo of America. "Since the ESRB began in 1994, every Nintendo video game has carried a rating because, ultimately, parents play the most vital role in the monitoring the activities of their children. To that end, we will make ESRB rating information available with the Nintendo 64 video game system and the Game Boy Color, so that parents can purchase the best, most appropriate entertainment for their families."

"The video game industry has the best rating system in entertainment. Sega supports the ESRB and the IDSA's efforts in educating the consumer and ultimately helping parents choose games that appropriate for their children," said Peter Moore, senior vice president, Sega of America, Inc. "We are launching Dreamcast on 9.9.99 and Sega is taking responsible action by including information on ESRB ratings inside the box of every new Dreamcast system as well as our Sega and third-party games."

"Gaming has become a legitimate form of entertainment and a popular leisure pastime enjoyed by millions of people," said Kaz Hirai, president and chief operating officer, Sony Computer Entertainment America. "With that, the video game industry has a responsibility to continue to educate the market about the ESRB ratings system and how to use the ratings when choosing gaming software. We are backing up our commitment to consumers and the industry as a whole by including the ESRB ratings and descriptors in all PlayStation hardware packages beginning this holiday season. This move will provide all PlayStation purchasers with the tools enabling them to make appropriate decisions on gaming content."

About 90 percent of all video game software, and an even higher percentage of hardware, is purchased by adults. By including the information on ESRB ratings in hardware packaging, the manufacturers are ensuring that every parent who buys a video game console for home use will have access to the ratings.

The ESRB was established in 1994 to create a voluntary video and PC game rating system so parents and consumers could make informed decisions about the nature of games before buying or renting them. Ratings and content descriptions have been displayed on the outer packaging of almost all video and PC game software packages since the ESRB was established.

Each game is assigned one of five ratings: Early Childhood, Everyone, Teen, Mature and Adults Only. Of the more than 5,000 games rated by the ESRB, 71 percent have received an "Everyone" rating; 19 percent carry a "Teen" rating; and only 7 percent carried a "Mature" rating. Games are also assigned one or more content descriptors, short phrases that describe game content of which parents should be aware.

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Contacts:

Dr. Arthur Pober, ESRB, 212-759-0700, www.esrb.org

Perrin Kaplan, Nintendo of America, 425- 861-2509

Charles Bellfield, Sega of America, 415-701-3825

Molly Smith, Sony Computer Entertainment America, 650-655-6044

- Finally, the President has called on the FTC and the Justice Department to study the marketing of violence to children.

Every child should have

Not full

Story - environment,
etc.

**Ratings System
Q&A
December 22, 1999**

Q: What is the Administration's reaction to the First Lady's announcement that she would seek to scrap the different ratings systems for movies, television, and video games for a single system?

A: The President has long believed in and has fought for giving more information to parents so that they can control what programs come into their living rooms and the media their kids are exposed to. This Administration has long held that a comprehensive, voluntary ratings system would enable parents to keep their kids safe from violent or inappropriate media. The President believes strongly that we all need to accept responsibility for the problem of youth violence and that those in the entertainment industry need to acknowledge their own influence and take responsibility for the messages they send to children.

Over the course of this Administration, the President has worked hard to give parents control over the music, movies, television, and video games their kids are exposed to and has urged the entertainment industry to give parents more information.

- Four years ago, President Clinton and Vice President Gore called for the creation of V-chip legislation. Approximately two weeks from now, all new television sets will have the V-chip installed as a result of this legislation.
- Second, the President has challenged the whole industry to stop showing guns in any ads or previews children might see.
- Third, he challenged theater and video store owners to enforce more strictly the rating systems on the movies they show, rent, and sell – a challenge that the theater owners have accepted.
- Additionally, the President has challenged the movie industry to reevaluate its entire ratings systems, especially the PG rating, to determine whether it is allowing too much gratuitous violence in movies approved for viewing by children.
- The President has also challenged the video game industry to widely inform the public of the ratings and enforce the ratings at the point of sale. Recently, the Interactive Digital Software industry accepted this challenge and set tough standards in advertising to ensure that video game software makers are providing appropriate, responsible, truthful, and accurate advertising. The industry also has developed guides for parents to be able to more effectively use the ratings on video games and has distributed these guides at the counter of video game stores over the holiday season. And, the industry has created a point-of-sale system to remind clerks to ask for identification from buyers to ensure that stores are not selling adult-rated games to minors.

*Stand Strong
FCC*

*NATO
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*ratings
+ content
descriptors*

*NBC
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all best
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ratings
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all that
BET
synthesizing
can we
are clear*

*long first sheet on President's challenges to media + entertainment
w/ all new challenges + progress*

Update on Parental Screening for the Internet

The Administration has been actively working to encourage the Internet industry to self-regulate and to help give parents the tools they need to protect their children from inappropriate material. As a result of the President and First Lady's Call to Action in May, the Administration has worked with the Internet industry to bring on board the 25 largest Internet providers to develop a comprehensive resource for parents. These companies developed "getnetwise" – a one-stop site where parents and teachers can learn how to provide kids with a safe, educational, and entertaining and age-appropriate online experience (see attached fact sheet). Through this web site, parents can access more than 80 technologies that allow them to monitor the amount of time their child spends on the Internet, tools to block information that the parents believes is inappropriate, and links to report troubling or illegal material. Both the Internet industry and parent advocacy groups have been very supportive of this work.

Highlighting the V-Chip

The most important point to highlight is that all new televisions produced after January 1, 2000 will include the V-Chip. Also, the Administration has developed a V-Chip task force to ensure that it is implemented effectively (see attached fact sheet).

Mothers Against Youth Violence

Pam Eckes' organization is doing very positive grassroots work and is a well-respected organization in the field (see attached information blurb).

Exkurs zur Natur
 Natur $\longleftrightarrow$ Naturkunde @ Natur
 mit Lehrinfo.

Starting next month, in January 2000, all new television sets produced will have the V-chip installed. The technology of V-chip is based on the television ratings system already developed and currently in use by the television industry, which could make the TV ratings system a standard. However, the information this ratings system provides is not nearly as substantive as that provided by the ESRB.

January 6, 2000

MEMORANDUM FOR HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

**FROM: ANN O'LEARY
RUBY SHAMIR**

CC: MELANNE VERVEER

SUBJECT: MEDIA RATINGS SYSTEMS

The purpose of this memo is both to update you on the President's challenges to the media industry to improve their ratings systems and to lay out some of the policy implications of implementing a uniform rating system for media and entertainment. To provide you with a reminder of the various rating systems, we have attached a copy of the memo to the President prepared by Neera Tanden explaining the different ratings systems for the various media and entertainment industries.

As you know, the problem is that there are too many ratings, parents are not given good information to understand how to best use the systems, and many of the ratings systems are not being adequately enforced. In order to address these concerns, the President has made a number of challenges to the various industries:

Movies: The President has challenged the movie industry to reevaluate its entire ratings system

Television: The major push in the television industry has been to protect children from programming that their parents believe is inappropriate. In order to accomplish this goal, the President fought for legislation that requires the V-Chip to be installed in all new television sets sold beginning January 1, 2000. At the May strategy session, the President announced two new initiatives to make sure the V-Chip becomes a useful tool for parents. The first was a V-Chip Task Force to ensure that the V-Chip law is implemented effectively. The FCC established the task force to ensure the V-Chip requirement is enforced; promote parental awareness about the V-Chip; encourage adoption of a standard label identifying television sets that contain the V-Chip; and study the use of the V-Chip and evaluate the effectiveness of the industry's ratings system. The President also announced a major public campaign to raise awareness about the V-Chip. Since the announcement, all four major networks have agreed to run PSAs on the V-Chip and the Kaiser Family Foundation in partnership with the Center for Media Education have produced a free booklet for parents on how the V-Chip works (RUBY – we need a copy of this booklet).

The goal of ensuring that all new televisions are installed with the V-Chip has been accomplished. The V-Chip, which stands for violence,

Sound Recordings

Interactive Electronic Games

Internet

NOW:

- (1) Brainstorming meetings with industry representatives.
- (2) Support McCain-Lieberman bill

LATER:

Move toward one-rating system

As you have stated, one clear reason to support the development of a uniform system is that it is the simplest way, to give parents consistent information about the content of the media that their kids are exposed to. Of the four systems in use today, the system that provides the most detailed content information is the video game ratings system developed by the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB), which, because it is so thorough, could be a standard bearer for a uniform system. However, there are a number of difficulties with this policy:

- (1) Since the system is voluntary, it may be difficult to get the less thorough ratings systems (television, movies) to agree to further disclosure.

Starting next month, in January 2000, all new television sets produced will have the V-chip installed. The technology of V-chip is based on the television ratings system already developed and currently in use by the television industry, which could make the TV ratings system a standard. However, the information this ratings system provides is not nearly as substantive as that provided by the ESRB.

① list of industry types
uniform ratings

② Writedators

January 6, 2000

③ Q & A (what has to be from) due?
time to go

MEMORANDUM FOR HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

FROM: ANN O'LEARY
RUBY SHAMIR

CC: MELANNE VERVEER

SUBJECT: MEDIA RATINGS SYSTEMS

media room - FCC

Neera

Elizabeth Montgomery

Peggy Shum

Q. Neary

The purpose of this memo is to update you on the President's challenges to the media industry to improve its ratings systems and to lay out some of the policy implications of implementing a uniform ratings system for media and entertainment. To provide you with a reminder of the various ratings systems, we have attached a copy of the memo to the President prepared by Neera Tanden explaining the different ratings systems for the various media and entertainment industries.

As you have pointed out, the main problems with the various ratings systems are that there are far too many ratings each based on different criteria, parents are not given good information on how to best use the ratings in many of the industries, and many of the ratings systems are not being adequately enforced. In order to address some of these concerns, the President has issued a number of challenges to the various industries. By and large, the industries have been working hard to meet those challenges, and should be applauded for their efforts. These various efforts, however, have not been aligned in order to develop one comprehensive system that would be easy for parents to understand and could be more easily enforced. As you recently noted, the industries need to be pushed further to work toward an easily understandable and enforceable system.

In order to move forward on this agenda, we agree that you should meet with industry representatives in order to hear about their progress thus far, to better understand the reasoning behind each system, and to brainstorm with the industry about a uniform system, but also to hear ideas from them on other ways in which the ratings systems could be simplified for parents and could be more readily enforced.

Action Taken on the President's Challenges

Below, we have outlined the President's challenges and the progress the industry has made to meet those challenges. As you will see, there are potential impediments to developing a uniform ratings system.

June 1st →

1-800-412-6975 - pm

FTC Report: As you know, the President called for the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and the Justice Department to jointly study the marketing of violence to children and, specifically, to evaluate the various rating systems. The FTC report will also evaluate the issue of enforceability of movie ratings. The FTC plans to complete the report by the fall of 2000.

Movies: The President made a number of challenges to the motion picture industry. First, he challenged theater and video store owners to enforce more strictly the ratings systems on the movies they show, rent, and sell – a challenge that the theater owners accepted. The National Association of Theater Owners (NATO) accepted this challenge and has been working to promote enforcement of the ratings by disseminating information to its members on the importance of checking ID's, and contacting sellers or theaters when informed of a break with policy. NATO has had on-going consultations with educational associations such as the PTA to develop ways to better educate parents. Although it is not yet public, NATO and the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) plan to release a new program which will include on all movie advertisements and posters both the rating, as well as movie-specific content information for each individual movie advertised.

Additionally, the President has challenged the whole industry to stop showing guns in any ads or previews children might see, and in response the MPAA has since implemented a policy of heightened scrutiny on movie advertisements.

Finally, the President challenged the movie industry to reevaluate its entire ratings systems, especially the PG rating, to determine whether it is allowing too much gratuitous violence in movies approved for viewing by children. At this point, we are not sure how far the industry has come to meet this challenge, but the FTC is including an evaluation of the movie industry ratings system in its report.

Television: The major push in the television industry has been to protect children from programming that their parents believe is inappropriate. In order to accomplish this goal, the President fought for legislation that requires the V-Chip to be installed in all new television sets sold beginning January 1, 2000. This goal was accomplished on time so that all televisions now on the market are installed with the V-Chip. The technology of the V-Chip is based on the television ratings system already developed and currently in use by the television industry. V-Chip is technology built into a TV set that "reads" the rating for a particular TV program and is used by parents to block out programs with these ratings. Currently, all programs on the broadcast networks are rated and encoded for V-Chip use (TV7, TV14, etc.), and all the networks, excluding NBC, use content descriptions in their ratings as well (S,V,L, etc.). Additionally, all cable channels, excluding the Black Entertainment Network (BET), encode their programming with the V-Chip ratings.

In order to promote awareness and give parents tools they need to effectively use the V-Chip, the President called for two new initiatives to make sure the V-Chip becomes a useful tool for parents. The first was the establishment of a V-Chip Task Force to ensure that the V-Chip law is implemented effectively. The FCC established the task force to ensure the V-Chip requirement is enforced; promote parental awareness about the V-Chip; encourage adoption of a standard label identifying television sets that contain the V-Chip; study the use of the V-Chip; and

evaluate the effectiveness of the industry's ratings system. The President also announced a major public awareness campaign about the V-Chip. Since the announcement, all four major networks have agreed to run PSAs on the V-Chip and the Kaiser Family Foundation in partnership with the Center for Media Education have produced a free booklet for parents on how the V-Chip works (please find copy of booklet attached).

One potential impediment to developing one uniform rating system is that the V-Chip has been programmed to read the ratings developed by the television industry. These ratings are based on age-appropriateness, as well as whether a program contains violence, sexual content, or explicit language. While the ratings offer a solid indicator on the age appropriateness and general content of the programming, some in the field have criticized these ratings for not being rigorous or substantive enough. If one uniform system was developed, the V-Chip would need to be reprogrammed to align with the new system or the entire system would need to be aligned with the television ratings.

Interactive Electronic Games: The President has also challenged the video game industry to widely inform the public of their ratings and enforce the ratings at the point of sale. In 1994, the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) established an independent board, the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) to develop and implement ratings for computer software. These ratings provide the most extensive and comprehensive ratings of any in the system and have been applauded by Senator Lieberman for their comprehensive nature. Recently, the IDSA accepted the President's challenge and worked with ESRB to set tough standards in advertising to ensure that video game software makers are providing appropriate, responsible, truthful, and accurate advertising.

The industry also has developed guides for parents to be able to more effectively use the ratings on video games and has distributed these guides at the counter of video game stores over the holiday season. And, the industry has created a point-of-sale system to remind clerks to ask for identification from buyers to ensure that stores are not selling adult-rated games to minors.

If a uniform ratings system were developed, the ISDA would most likely work very hard to ensure that the standards were as tough as those already developed. The most significant problem in this industry is that the ratings are confusing and not easy for parents to understand, and the industry has been criticized for not enforcing the ratings. They are, however, working to address both of these issues.

Internet: The Administration has been actively working to encourage the Internet industry to self-regulate and to help give parents the tools they need to protect their children from inappropriate material. As a result of the call to action that you and the President issued last May, the Administration has worked with the Internet industry to encourage the 25 largest Internet providers to develop a comprehensive resource for parents. These companies developed "getnetwise" – a one-stop site where parents and teachers can learn how to provide kids with a safe, educational, and entertaining and age-appropriate online experience. Through this web site, parents can access more than 80 technologies that allow them to monitor the amount of time their child spends on the Internet, and provide them with tools to block inappropriate information, as

well as links to report troubling or illegal material. Both the Internet industry and parent advocacy groups have been very supportive of this work.

A number of large companies on the Internet have begun to use the ratings system for their products with little prodding. One example is America On-Line which recently announced that it will require all games played on the AOL service to be rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB), and will work with others in the industry to press for wide adoption of game ratings across the Internet. Games which are rated adults-only or which are not rated will not be available for play on the AOL service. Beyond.com, CNET and eToys joined AOL in this announcement and have agreed that any games in their inventory which have been rated by the ESRB will have their ESRB rating prominently displayed wherever they are sold. Additionally, Amazon.com uses ratings on the music, DVDs and games sold on it web site.

Legislative Action

In June of 1999, Senators McCain and Lieberman introduced the “Media Violence Labeling Act of 1999,” which calls for a consistent and comprehensive system for labeling violent content in audio and visual media products (including the labeling of products in advertising and marketing). The bill calls for the various industries to come together and voluntarily submit a joint proposal to the FTC for consideration.

THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

May 10, 1999

REMARKS BY THE FIRST LADY
AFTER WHITE HOUSE STRATEGY SESSION
ON CHILDREN, VIOLENCE AND RESPONSIBILITY

The Rose Garden

2:06 P.M. EDT

MRS. CLINTON: Thank you, all. I think everyone who participated in the meeting this morning came away with the positive feeling that there isn't any problem that we face when it comes to our young people, that if we're honest enough to talk about it we can come up with ideas about how to address it, and we can better empower all parts of our society to be part of the solution.

To that end, the President mentioned that we want to have a national campaign to prevent youth violence. It's modeled on the national campaign against teenage pregnancy, the national campaign that was launched to convince employers to hire people coming off of welfare to go to work. It's in the greatest of American traditions of the kind of public-private partnership that is unique to our country.

And in the next weeks that campaign will be put together. It will be a not-for-profit, 501-C3 effort that will bring together many of the people around the table today in the East Room and many others. It will come forward, we hope, with very specific suggestions about what parents can do, what schools can do, what community groups can do, what the media can do, what gun manufacturers can do, what all of us can do.

You probably know that I really do think it takes a village; but my book had a subtitle, and that was, it takes a village to raise a child and other lessons children teach us. And the most important lesson I think all of us are learning, once again because of the tragedy in Littleton and the consequences that flow from that, are that we have to do a better job doing our most important job, and that is helping to raise our children and create a climate in our country that is good for children.

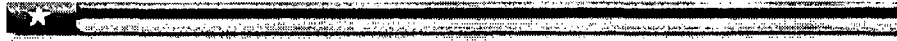
We have to battle a lot of attitudes and cynicism and skepticism and hopelessness and helplessness, and a sense by many people that the forces that are arrayed against families and

children are just too big to try to deal with, and maybe the only thing we can do is just shut the doors of our own home and try to deal with what goes on there. But we have to do that as well.

So I'm very encouraged by the conversation that we had this morning, and I'm very excited about the prospects for this national campaign. And I hope that everyone, everyone in America, will realize that there's a role for each of us in trying to prevent youth violence. And more than that—trying to reach out and listen to our children so that we can provide the kind of support that they need.

And someone who has known that and done it in her own life, and done it in our public life for many years, who has continually addressed the issue of mental health and particularly how it affects children—someone who I admire greatly and who will be chairing the first ever White House Conference on Mental Health on June 7 -- and that is Tipper Gore. (Applause.)

MRS. GORE: Thank you very much, Mrs. Clinton....



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Federal Trade Commission
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580

For Your Information: August 24, 1999

FTC Seeks Public Comment for Study of the Marketing Practices of the Entertainment Industry

As part of its study of the marketing practices of the entertainment industry, the Federal Trade Commission is seeking public comment on proposed information requests to members of the motion picture, recording, and video, personal computer, and coin-operated game industries, and on proposed consumer research. The information solicited will be used by the FTC and the Department of Justice to produce the study, requested by the President on June 1, 1999, on whether and to what extent the entertainment industry markets age-restricted violent material to children.

The request for public comment, which is required under the Paperwork Reduction Act and will be published in the Federal Register soon, outlines the information to be sought from industry members. The requests for information will be sent to 60-75 members of the entertainment industry to examine: (1) the voluntary systems used by industry members to rate or designate violent content within three industry groups - movies, recordings, and video or computer games; (2) how industry members market or advertise movies, recordings, and video or computer games with violent content; and (3) whether industry members have policies or procedures to restrict access to movies, recordings, and video or computer games with violent content.

The Federal Register notice also seeks comment on a proposal to conduct focus groups of children and to survey parents to gather specific information on their perceptions of entertainment rating or labeling systems.

Written comments should be sent to the Secretary, Federal Trade Commission, Room H-159, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580, or by e-mail to entstudy@ftc.gov. The submissions should include the submitter's name, address, telephone number, and, if available, FAX number and e-mail address. All submissions should be captioned "Entertainment Industry Study" - FTC File No. P994511.

The Commission vote to publish the Federal Register notice was 4-0.

Copies of the Federal Register notice are available from the FTC's web site at <http://www.ftc.gov> and also from the FTC's Consumer Response Center, Room 130, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580; 877-FTC-HELP (877-382-4357); TDD for the hearing impaired 202-326-2502. To find out the latest news as it is announced, call the FTC NewsPhone recording at 202-326-2710.

MEDIA CONTACT:

Victoria Streitfeld
Office of Public Affairs

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202-326-2718

(FTC File No. 859907)
(violfedreg)

(Billing Code: 6750-01-M)

FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

Agency information collection activities;
Proposed collection: comment request

AGENCY: Federal Trade Commission (FTC).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: On June 1, 1999, the President of the United States requested that the Federal Trade Commission and the Department of Justice conduct a study on the marketing practices of the entertainment industry to determine whether and to what extent the industry markets age-restricted violent material to children. Before gathering this information, the FTC is soliciting public comments on proposed information requests to members of the following industries: (1) motion picture; (2) recording; and (3) video, personal computer, and coin operated games. The FTC also is soliciting public comments on proposed consumer research. Comments will be considered before the FTC submits a request for Office of Management and Budget (OMB) review under the Paperwork Reduction Act.

DATES: Comments must be submitted on or before [insert date 60 days from the date of publication in the FEDERAL REGISTER].

ADDRESSES: Send written comments to Secretary, Federal Trade Commission, Room H-159, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580, or by e-mail to [<entsstudy@ftc.gov>](mailto:entsstudy@ftc.gov). The submissions should include the submitter's name, address, telephone number, and , if available, FAX number and e-mail address. All submissions should be captioned "Entertainment Industry Study" - FTC File No. P994511."

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT: Requests for additional information should be addressed to Sally Forman Pitofsky, Attorney, Division of Financial Practices, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, 600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20580. Telephone: (202) 326-3318, E-mail [<spitofsky@ftc.gov>](mailto:spitofsky@ftc.gov).

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: The FTC invites comments on: (1) whether the proposed collections of information are necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the FTC, including whether the information will have practical utility; (2) the accuracy of the FTC's estimate of the burden of the proposed collections of information; (3) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (4) ways to minimize the burden of collecting information on those who are to respond, including through the use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology, e.g., permitting electronic submission of responses. The FTC will submit the proposed information collection requirements to OMB for review, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (44 U.S.C. Chapter 35, as amended).

A. Survey of the Motion Picture, Recording, and Video Game Industries

1. Description of the collection of information and proposed use

The FTC proposes to send information requests to approximately 60 to 75 members of the motion picture industry, the recording industry, and the video, personal computer, and coin operated game industry ("industry members") to examine: (1) the voluntary systems used by industry members to rate or designate violent content in movies, recordings, and video or computer games; (2) how industry members market or advertise movies, recordings, and video or computer games with violent content; and (3) whether industry members have policies or procedures to restrict access by children or teenagers under 18 to movies, recordings, and video or computer games having violent content. The information sought will be obtained by interviews and document requests. The information will be sought on a voluntary basis, although the FTC has authority to compel production of this information under Section 6(b) of the FTC Act, 15 U.S.C. 46(b).

2. Estimated hours burden

a. Interviews

Staff will conduct initial and follow-up interviews with individual industry members. The interviews will focus on the subject areas (1) - (3) above. The interviews should total no more than 20 hours for each industry member, for a maximum total of approximately 1,500 hours.

b. Document Requests

Staff will also ask each industry member to submit documents relating to the above subject areas. Because the members within each of the industries will necessarily vary in size, we have provided a range of the estimated hours burden. This range is between 225 hours and 450 hours per member depending on the size of each. The total estimated burden of producing such documents per member is based on the following:

organize document retrieval 25-50 hours

identify requested information 100-200 hours

retrieve responsive information 50-100 hours

copy requested information 50-100 hours

Thus, the cumulative hours burden to produce documents sought will be between:

16,875 (225 hours x 75 members) to 33,750 (450 hours x 75 members)

3. Estimated cost burden

a. Interviews

We have assumed that mid-management level personnel will handle the responses to

interviews and have applied an average hourly wage of \$150/hour for their labor. Thus, the total cost per member for the interviews should not exceed \$3,000 or \$225,000 for the 75 respondents. Staff further estimates that the capital costs associated with the industry interviews are minimal. The interviews are likely to require no capital expenditures.

b. Document Production

It is not possible to calculate with precision labor costs associated with this document production as they entail varying compensation levels of management, and/or support staff among many companies of different sizes and in different industries. Individuals among some or all of those labor categories may be involved in the information collection process. Nonetheless, we have assumed that mid-management level personnel will handle most of the tasks involved in gathering and producing responsive information, and have applied an average hourly wage of \$150/hour for their labor. We also have applied an average hourly wage of \$10 for the labor of clerical employees who will copy the responsive materials. Thus, the total labor cost per member should range between \$26,750 and \$53,500 per member depending on the size of each:

\$ 26,750 (175 hours to assemble and review the production x \$150 per hour

+ 50 hours for copying x \$10 per hour) to \$53,500 (350 hours to assemble and review the production x \$150 per hour + 100 hours for copying x \$10 per hour).

Accordingly, the total labor costs for the 75 members should range between approximately \$2 million and \$4 million.

Staff estimates that the capital or other non-labor costs associated with the information requests are minimal. While the information requests may necessitate that industry members store copies of the requested information provided to the Commission, industry members should already have in place the means to do so. Even if an industry member should find it necessary to purchase a storage device -- which conceivably might be served by a cardboard box or comparable item -- the cost of any such device annualized over its useful life likely would be very minimal. In addition, industry members may have to purchase office supplies such as file folders, computer diskettes, photocopier toner, or paper in order to comply with the Commission's information requests. Staff estimates that each industry member would spend \$500 for such costs regarding the information requests, for a total additional non-labor cost burden of \$37,500 (\$500 x 75 members).

B. Consumer Research

1. Description of the collection of information and proposed use

The FTC also proposes to conduct focus groups of 150 children between the ages of 13 and 16, and survey 1,000 parents having a child between the ages of 7 and 17 in order to gather specific information on their perceptions of the entertainment rating or labeling systems. This information will be collected on a voluntary basis, and the identities of the consumers will remain confidential. The FTC will contract with a consumer research firm to identify consumers and conduct the focus groups and the survey. The results will assist the FTC in determining whether and how consumers use the rating or labeling systems of the motion

picture, recording, and video, computer, and coin operated game industries.

2. Estimated hours burden

The FTC will contract with a survey firm to: (1) identify and conduct focus groups on 150 children between the ages of 13 and 16; and (2) identify and survey 1,000 parents with children between the ages of 7 and 17. For the focus groups, the contractor will identify respondents either by drawing names from a pre-assembled teen list or by conducting telephone screening within the general population. If telephone screening, the contractor would contact parents and ask whether a child in the household between the ages of 13 and 16 will participate in a focus group. Staff estimates that the screener will be asked of approximately 2,500 respondents in order to obtain a large enough random sample for the focus groups.

For the parental telephone survey, the contractor will first identify respondents using a screening question in its monthly omnibus telephone survey and then ask whether respondents, with a child between the ages of 7 and 17, would participate in the survey. Allowing for non-response, the screener question will be asked of approximately 3,500 respondents, as screening that number will provide a large enough random sample for this survey.

The FTC staff estimates that the screening for the focus groups and the survey will consume no more than two minutes of each respondent's time. Thus, cumulatively, screening should require approximately 200 hours (6,000 total respondents x 2 minutes for each).

The FTC will pretest the parental survey on 24 respondents to ensure that all questions are easily understood. This pretest will take approximately 15 minutes per person. The hours burden imposed by the pretest will be approximately 6 hours (24 respondents x 15 minutes per survey). Participating in the focus groups will take approximately one hour per respondent, with a total burden of 150 hours. Answering the parental survey will impose a burden per respondent of approximately 15 minutes, totaling 250 hours for all respondents to the survey (1,000 respondents x 15 minutes per survey). Thus, total hours burden attributable to the consumer research will approximate 606 hours (200 + 6 + 150 + 250).

3. Estimated cost burden

The cost per respondent should be negligible. Participation is voluntary, and will not require any labor expenditures by respondents. There are no capital, start-up, operation, maintenance, or other similar costs to the respondents.

By direction of the Commission.

Donald S. Clark
Secretary

Pocket Guide: ENTERTAINMENT RATINGS

Movies, Video Games, Games on the Internet, Coin Operated Video Games, Music, Resources

October 1999

Movies

Ratings appear in ads for films, movie listings and at theaters.

G	PG	PG-13	R	NC-17
General audience	Parental Guidance Suggested	Parents Strongly Cautioned	Restricted	No one 17 and under admitted.
All ages admitted.	Some material may not be suitable for children.	Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13.	Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.	

Rating descriptions sometimes are published in newspaper listings or movie reviews; you also can find them at theaters and at www.mpaa.org. Some descriptions you might see are:

Rated PG for mild language and violence.

Rated PG-13 for mature themes and a scene of violence.

Rated PG-13 for violence, including bloody aftermath of a shooting.

Rated R for language and strong bloody violence.

Rated R for strong graphic horror, violence and gore, and for language.

Video Games

Age-based ratings are on the front of video game packages and in ads.

EC	E	T	M	AO
Early Childhood	Everyone	Teen	Mature	Adults Only
Content suitable for children age 3 and older.	Content suitable for children 6 and older; game may contain minimal violence, some comic mischief or some crude language.	Content suitable for those 13 and older. Game may contain violent content, mild or strong language and suggestive themes.	Content suitable for those 17 and older. Game may include more intense violence or language than products rated T and may include mature sexual themes.	Content suitable for adults only. Game may include graphic depictions of sex and/or violence. Products rated AO are not intended to be sold or rented to anyone under the age of 18.

The Entertainment Software Rating Board assigns content descriptions to video games. You will find these on the back of video game packages, at www.esrb.org or at 1-800-771-3772. Some descriptions you might see are:

Mild Animated Violence
 Animated Blood
 Mild Realistic Violence
 Realistic Blood
 Animated Violence
 Animated Blood and Gore
 Realistic Violence
 Realistic Blood and Gore

Games on the Internet

The Entertainment Software Rating Board Interactive (ESRBI) provides age-based ratings for interactive web sites. These ratings appear on a site's homepage if the entire site is rated; on the first page of the rated section if that is the only section that is rated; or where a game is accessed if that is the only part of a site that is rated. The ESRBI ratings are:

ECI	EI	TI	MI	AOI
Early Childhood Interactive	Everyone Interactive	Teen Interactive	Mature Interactive	Adults Only Interactive
Content suitable for children age 3 and older.	Content suitable for children 6 and older.	Content suitable for ages 13 and older.	Content suitable for ages 17 and older.	Content suitable for adults only.

The ESRBI provides content descriptors for online games and interactive sites that signal violence, nudity, sexual themes, strong language and the use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco. Some descriptions you might see are:

Mild Violence
 Violence
 Graphic Violence
 Strong Hate Speech
 Weapon Making
 Suicide

Coin Operated Video Games

A color-coded "traffic light" system advises players whether games have strong or mild violence, language or sexual content.

Green	Yellow		Red	
Suitable for all ages.	Animated Violence	Life Like Violence	Animated Violence	Life Like Violence
	Mild Scenes of violence involving cartoon-like characters in combative activity with violent elements that do not result in bloodshed, serious injury or death to characters.	Mild Scenes of violence involving human-like characters in combative activity with violent elements that do not result in bloodshed, serious injury or death to characters.	Strong Scenes of strong violence involving cartoon-like characters which result in bloodshed, serious injury or death to characters.	Strong Scenes of strong violence involving human-like characters which result in bloodshed, serious injury or death to characters.

Music

Some compact discs or cassettes have labels that say "Parental Advisory - Explicit Content."

These labels indicate that the recording may contain strong language or expressions of violence, sex or substance abuse. Individual record companies provide these labels voluntarily. If you have questions, ask about the lyrics.

Media ratings systems are a starting point for children and parents one resource for information to help protect children from violence in movies, games and music.

A word to parents about restricting access: The Internet Content Rating Association has a content advisory system that indicates violence, nudity, sex or offensive language on Internet sites. The system, RSAC on the Internet (RSACi), allows the use of blocking software or browsers to restrict access to sites it has rated. RSACi ratings related to violence include:

Level 0	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
None or sports related	Injury to human being	Destruction of realistic objects	Aggressive violence or death to humans	Rape or wanton, gratuitous violence

Resources

[Motion Picture Association of America](#)
[Entertainment Software Rating Board](#)
[Internet Content Rating Association](#)
[American Amusement Machine Association](#)
[Recording Industry Association of America, Inc.](#)
[Federal Trade Commission](#)
[National Association of Attorneys General](#)
[Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, U.S. Department of Justice](#)
[YWCA of the U.S.A.](#)

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THE WHITE HOUSE
Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

June 4, 1999

ABC GOOD MORNING AMERICA SPECIAL
ON SCHOOL VIOLENCE

The Cabinet Room

7:05 A.M. EDT

Q All right. Let me turn to the situation of kids and guns. The House, in the next few weeks, is going to start debating a bill that includes some gun control measures that were passed by the Senate. And political points will be scored by both sides in that debate.

But you and I know, don't we, really, that it's not going to make a damn bit of difference—only on the margins—in the way kids get guns.

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, I don't necessarily agree with that. I think the Brady Bill has made a real difference; having the background checks matters. We know that 250,000 people, from the time I signed the Brady Bill in '94 until last year, were unable to get handguns. We know just since the Insta-Check went in last year, another 36,000 people have been denied the right to get handguns. So closing the gun show loophole matters. Doing a background check for some other things I recommended, a background check for explosives as well—very important in the Littleton case—these things will matter.

Now, does more need to be done? I think so. I think that more does need to be done. The Speaker of the House agreed that we ought to make it unlawful for people under 21 to have handguns, and I was encouraged by that. And that's, of course, something I'm supporting.

Q But even with the checks—what you can't get in the front door, so many people go around and get in the back door. Forty percent of the gun sales in this country are unregulated; nobody checks them. There are a group of kids that you're going to meet in the next half-hour who are going to tell you, if I want to get a gun, I can go get one, and nobody's going to know about it, and I'll have it within a week.

THE PRESIDENT: That's true, but the more we move to make such transactions, and possession unlawful. And the more we move against people who perpetrate them, the more success we will have.

You know, it's funny—even the NRA says, well, we ought to prosecute crimes. Well, we ought to make the right things crimes, and we ought to make it unlawful for children to

possess these weapons; we ought to make it unlawful for people to sell them to them or to transfer to them; and we ought to close the loopholes in the law. And as we do that, we will make a difference.

Also, keep in mind that the Littleton example is not the only example that we have to be mindful of. There are 13 children a day who are shot in America, who lose their lives, in ones and twos on the streets.

Q There's a Littleton every day.

THE PRESIDENT: So we have to make—anything we can do to keep guns out of the hands of criminals and kids, we ought to do.

Q But when you went to Littleton, a friend of yours who supports you on gun control said to me in the last 48 hours, the President, because, as he said, Littleton has seared the national conscience—the President had a chance to roar on gun control and he meowed—and that was a friend of yours. There are very basic measures that could be taken that people agree on. We register every automobile in America—

THE PRESIDENT: Absolutely.

Q -- we don't register guns. That's a step that would make a difference.

THE PRESIDENT: Look, let's join the real world here. You want to have an honest conversation? Let's have an honest conversation. I am the first President who ever took on the NRA. I got my party in Congress to stand with me on the Brady Bill, which has made a difference, on the assault weapons ban. We are now in the process of closing loopholes in the assault weapons ban.

What happened to them when they did that? In 1994, we lost between 12 and 20 members of the House of Representatives because they were targeted by the NRA for standing up for the lives of our children. Now, wait a minute. You talk about roaring and meowing—then I came forward with this legislation. Did this roar through the Senate? No. We passed a bill causing the gun show loophole by 51-50 because of the Vice President of the United States. Did the House of Representatives make a priority out of what was passed in the Senate and pass it right through? No. They went home before taking action. Why? To give the NRA time to lobby them, to water down what was passed.

Now, I have made it perfectly clear that I want to get what was passed in the Senate, passed in the House. Then we will come back and try to pass some more things, because Littleton did sear the conscience of the nation. The question is not whether we have seared the conscience of the nation; the question is whether, on gun issues, whether the people who now constitute the House and the Senate will pass what is sensible.

And I intend to do that. But for you to say that I shouldn't take what I can get because—and instead I should ask for things that I am absolutely positive will be defeated in the Congress, is quite wrong. And to ignore the fact—and whoever you talked about that you don't want to out here—to ignore the fact that my administration and my party took on this issue when no one else would and paid a huge price for it—and lost control of the House of Representatives in all probability because of it—and to pretend that this is an easy thing now because Littleton

happened, is wrong. We are working very hard to pass sensible measures that will make a difference, that will save children's lives.

You say they won't save all lives. You say there are stronger measures that could be taken. You are absolutely right. You have no evidence that they could pass in this Congress.

Now, I will do my best to advocate more, but I am doing it—and I've made it clear. I want to do this in sequence. I want to pass what we've passed in the Senate in the House. Then I want us to come back with a second set of recommendations. I intend to keep working on this. I think this is going to take years. We have—the Congress is out of touch with the American people.

Q But let me come back to you on that. The polls—I believe—really, the polls have shown that this country would accept registration of firearms. And yet we don't do that, and we're not fighting about regulation of guns—

THE PRESIDENT: That's because --

Q -- you regulate every other consumer product in America.

THE PRESIDENT: But you want to have a candid conversation. The reason is, this Congress came to power after the 1994 elections because in critical races the people who voted for more modest things, like the Brady Bill—which the polls showed the voters support—got beat. They got beat, Charlie.

Q But hasn't the NRA won the debate at that point?
Once we say—

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- it's politically impossible—

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- we can't do it—

THE PRESIDENT: I didn't say it was—

Q -- we won't propose it, hasn't the NRA—

THE PRESIDENT: No.

Q -- basically framed the debate at that point?

THE PRESIDENT: No. I didn't say it was politically impossible. You say I should be recommending more; I ask you to look at the vote in the Senate, which historically has been more willing to deal with this than the House, and look at what we passed. We passed closing the gun show loophole—which, I don't care what you say, or my friend says these kids say, is a big deal—we passed it by one vote. One vote.

And you're saying, well, why didn't you recommend something more sweeping? And I told you that I intend to recommend further measures, but I'd like to pass what we have passed to the Senate, because it makes a difference. The things that we passed in the Senate will make a difference.

Should we do more? Should people ought to have to register guns like they register their cars? Do I think that? Of course, I do. Of course, I do. Now—but I tell you, the American people may have one opinion, but they elected the Congress and the Congress doesn't have that opinion.

I'm going to do my best to move the Congress and the people can move them, but we can only—how foolish would it be for me to be debating this issue when these things are before the Congress, they can save children's lives, and I should blow by them because they're not enough? I don't think so.

Q I want to take you to the other room. There are some young kids in there who want to ask you about other things, about the glamorization of violence in the media, those kinds of things—about parental responsibility. We'll get to all of that. Come on in the other room, we'll do that.

THE PRESIDENT: Good.

Q Let's go to Diane in the Roosevelt Room.

* * * * *

Q Good morning, America. I'm Charles Gibson.

Q And I'm Diane Sawyer.

And we continue our special two-hour broadcast on kids and guns from the White House. We have come into the Roosevelt Room, the President has accompanied us and we have been joined by the First Lady, Hillary Rodham Clinton. And for the next 30 to 35 minutes or so, we're going to broadcast without commercial interruption, talking with a group of high school students that we have gathered from around the country about this subject.

Q And they are experts in some of the themes that we have all been talking about: accessibility of kids to guns, parenting, and whether this is a culture that glamorizes violence and whether that's what we want or not. So Charlie and I are going to take our seats in the Roosevelt Room bleachers here, and I'm going to start with Albert Smith, because I know you wanted to say something or ask something.

I should tell you, Mr. President and Mrs. Clinton, that Albert's sister was wounded in gunfire in Evanston, Illinois. She's all right now, but he has some pretty passionate feelings about all of this.

So, Albert, you begin.

ALBERT: Well, Mr. President, I listened to your interview and I couldn't help—well, I'm encouraged by the fact that you're working hard to pass some gun legislation, but how can I be sure that that legislation will prevent accidents like my sister being shot and various friends of

mine? How can I be sure of that? And how spectacular is this legislation and what makes it different?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think, first of all, we can't say that any one law will make a difference. But I think if you look at the school shootings—and I think all of you know this, but we ought to say this to America—this is not just about school shootings, although they're very important, but 13 children are killed every day by guns on the streets, in the neighborhoods and various circumstances.

So I think there are basically three problems. You have more kids that are kind of at risk of violence. You have a culture that desensitizes and glorifies violence, and desensitizes people to it. And it's way too easy to get guns.

And so what I think we have to do is to work on all three things. And we've got to pass as much legislation as we can that makes it—keeps guns out of the wrong hands, and basically makes it harder for kids and harder for criminals to get guns. And this legislation will do that. It will help us close some of the loopholes; it will help us strengthen the background checks. It will also do something that was very important at Littleton and will become increasingly important with the Internet giving so much information to kids—it will put a lot of our background requirements for guns into explosives, too, which I think are very important. After the Littleton thing, I think we can all see that.

But I can't guarantee that. There are over 200 million guns in American society now, in a country of about 260-plus million people. But we can make it a lot harder, and we can dramatically reduce the chances that such things will occur.

Q If I could, Mr. President, I would like to play a short clip here, because I want to ask the students about something, and I'd love to have Mrs. Clinton talk to this as well.

We keep talking about legislation, but what about you in schools? Reading through the notes, I was so surprised how many of you have known that a kid, a friend sometimes, had a gun in school, but you said you weren't sure you'd tell anybody about it.

Let me just show you a young man—he's a freshman, and he travels around the country showing how easy it is to walk into school carrying not gun, but guns. I want to play this clip.

(A video is shown.)

Q Twelve total guns. He does it as a warning to students and to teachers that it can be done without you being able to spot it, which raises this question I want to ask all of you. It's called snitching, as we know, but how do you feel—will you all be willing to take responsibility if you hear someone threatening something, if you see somebody with a gun, telling an adult?

And then, Mrs. Clinton, I'd love to know what you'd like to say to them about that.

Q If you saw a friend with a gun in school, how many of you would tell an authority?

STUDENT: Now I would.

Q Really, truly, truly, truly. Would you have two months ago, three months ago?

STUDENT: Yes.

Q Fewer.

Q Trey faced this, as you'll find out in just a few moments. Mrs. Clinton?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's a very important question, because when we talk about dealing with this issue we're really asking everybody to take responsibility. And I know that it's hard. I've been in lots of settings with lots of kids, talking to them. You know, sometimes you don't know whether to take somebody seriously. Somebody says that they're really mad or they're going to kill themselves or kill somebody else—it's sometimes hard to know whether they're just blowing off steam or whether there's something more there. But I think we ought to err on the side of caution.

And I was glad to see all your hands go up and I was glad you were honest enough to say that a couple of months ago that might not have been the way you would have felt. Because we're really going to have to look to young people also, not just adults and not just people in government positions, but everybody to figure out what we're going to do about this and to be more thoughtful and really try to respond.

And, more than that, if somebody is doing this, that person needs some help and needs some intervention or some supervision, or needs somebody to try to give them some guidance that they may not have otherwise.

Q Anybody here disagree and think you shouldn't be doing it? Go ahead.

CHRISSEY: My name is Chrissy and I'm from Kennedy High School. I'm a leadership training institute student. I was wondering what actions you think as a student that we can take in our community to help gun control further?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think there are a lot of things that you can do. On Mother's Day we took a pledge that I hope everybody would take, and I hope that a lot of parents listening would take it, too. I think that young people, especially teenagers, not to give any child unsupervised access to a firearm; not to go into homes, or let your younger siblings go into homes where you know guns are and are not safely stored and taken care of.

And I know this sounds like, you know, the nosey mother routine, but I think every parent—and I would suggest older teenagers, like yourselves, you need to find out what's in the homes you're going to. You guys are going to a party, make sure there are no guns around; make sure that the parents there keep them under lock and key if they have them. If you own a gun or you know people who do, make sure it's locked up and stored without the ammunition. In fact, make it stored where the ammunition is stored separately.

And then I believe that there is a lot of work that young people can do in schools through peer mediation and counseling to try to help solve problems, but I also think your voices need to be heard on this gun legislation debate.

You know, we've made some progress in the last several years with the Brady Bill and some of the bans on assault weapons, but we have a lot of work to do. And there's no reason why a

lot of you who are about to be or already are 18 can't make sure your voices are heard on that, too.

THE PRESIDENT: If I could just say one thing, to go back to put the two questions together, there are some schools, some high schools, which have hotlines which young people can call if other students bring guns to school, and they know two things if they call. They know, number one, that the children will not be outed, their identities won't be disclosed if they call, and, number two, that some authority will check on the presence of the gun in the school that day.

So I think that's really important. If it's a problem in schools throughout the country, it's a specific thing that some schools have used with great success.

Q Mr. President, if I could ask you, members of gun organizations say that the ability is there to do something about kids -- 6,000 kids in the last two years in schools found to have guns, but, in fact, only 13 were prosecuted for it. Do you think there should be more prosecutions, and do you agree?

THE PRESIDENT: I don't know. You know, I don't think

all those kids, the reason they know that and the only reason they know that is that since I've been President, we instituted a zero tolerance for guns in schools, so the kids were sent home if they had the guns.

Now, it's up to the local prosecutors to decide whether to prosecute them. But you should know that the general argument that prosecutions are down is simply not true. And federal prosecutions are up by 30 percent of serious crimes, and overall gun prosecutions, state and federal, are up. And gun-related crimes are down.

This is a special problem—problems of violence against children by guns is a special problem that, in my view, you can make the prosecution argument. We ought to make it harder to get guns, we ought to deal with the culture and we ought to deal with the schools and the communities and help the parents and the kids do more.

Q I want to call on Leeanne Dews if I can, because you had your hand up. And, first of all, Leeanne, can I just tell the President and Mrs. Clinton that your sister was killed in Pearl, Mississippi.

LEEANNE: Yes. You had said something about zero tolerance in the schools—then why isn't it mandatory for metal detectors and police security at all schools?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, I think—let me say, generally we have not had a federal law that requires schools to do metal detectors, but what we do is we provide funds every year to help schools buy the security equipment. And I believe—when I saw that young man there take the 12 guns out of his clothing, I thought maybe we should do more in that regard.

A lot of schools are, for obvious reasons, reluctant to have metal detectors. But I think that the schools that have them have not had these instances, basically because you can't get in—at least inside the school.

Q I'm interested to know what percentage of you, since you all live with this problem every day, what percentage of you would be willing to accept metal detectors at your schools. And I'm going to take this a step further in a minute.

There is a county—we've got a little piece and I want you to take a look at it. It's a piece about a county, Bibb County, Georgia. And in Bibb County, it's the largest county in Georgia—it's never had a gun incident in schools. But they have police walking into classrooms. Take a look at this piece of videotape and you tell me what you think of it.

(A video is shown.)

Q Now, they're willing to sacrifice that. There's pictures of police walking and interrupting classes, checking students during class. Are you willing to go that far?

KATHRYN: My name is Kathryn Long, I'm from Kensington, Maryland. I know that at my school, after the Littleton incident, I was very interested in what my principal would do about it, and he was very calm about it. He focused on communication in how he talked to us, and that communication was important. And that made me feel safer.

I know that at my school, we don't have anything close to that much security. They've never had a gun at their school, but neither have we. And I know that at my middle school, there's a lot of security and I felt kind of really trapped in, and that was when I rebelled against it. And I'm not quite sure if making all teenagers feel like villains because there are a couple that brought guns, that that's a quick fix to the solution.

And maybe in the meantime, that would be important. But I don't think that you can lock down with police force. I think this is more of a societal issue. I mean, for years, kids have been teased and for ages kids have gone to school, but it's now in 1999 and the '90s that they're killing each other for it. I know that my parents' generation, to rebel, they made love. (Laughter.) But we are rebelling by harming other people. I believe the media has a large part in it. And I disagree with things like metal detectors. There are ways to get around it.

Q Let me turn to Sarah McCarthy, who is here from McLean, Virginia. Do you have a comment on that?

SARAH: You, especially, Mrs. Clinton, have always encouraged "It takes a village to raise a child," and that whole idea, and bringing that into the school system and having everybody involved. But especially watching that piece, how do you draw the line between bringing in security, which I think is definitely needed, such as metal detectors, searches, things like that—drawing the lines, and then crossing over a line where students start to feel violated, their personal rights?

And I know there were threats at my school and, you know, there was extra security that day and everybody did pull together, but at the same time, having the policemen walking down the halls, in a way that brought in a fear that wasn't there before. And how do you draw the line between the two, between higher security and being safer and just personal rights?

MRS. CLINTON: I think that's a really important question, Sarah. And I think that we've got to go at this from so many different directions. The metal detector is much less intrusive than having random searches and the like. And I think each community has to do a very careful

analysis of what they think is really going on with their kids. In places where metal detectors have been used, I think people feel that after a while it didn't become much of an intrusion—it's like getting on an airplane, we all do it these days.

But that's not the real problem. And so I think we have to both do what we can to protect kids, but we've got to do a better job of—going back to your point about creating a climate in which kids feel free to seek out help, kids feel that they've got support if they've got problems. Those guns are like a symbol of the problems they're bringing to school. So we need to do more to try to go on many different fronts to deal with this problem.

Q I want to turn to the issue, if I can, of glamorization of violence in the American culture, because I know we have a war going on here about video games and the extent to which they contribute and don't. But before we do, as a footnote, I'd like to ask Trey Carver, sitting next to me, just to tell for all the school officials out there, what happened when he says he went in to say he knew Thomas Solomon in Conyers, Georgia, and he felt there was trouble brewing.

TREY: I went in there at school, and at lunchtime we went outside to go use the pay phone and he took me in a corner and showed me a gun that he had in his book bag.

Q This is how long before the incident?

TRAY: I can't recall.

Q Weeks?

TREY: Yes, it was like a couple of weeks, probably.

And he showed it to me and said he was going to sell it after school. So later on that day, I was thinking—I thought to myself I needed to do the right thing, so I went to the office and said something about it. And then went and looked for him, but he had left school early. And the next day, they searched him, but they didn't find it on him. And a couple weeks later, he ended up shooting six people.

THE PRESIDENT: What do you think they should have done?

TREY: I think they should have done a lot more than they did. I think at least if they didn't, they should have called his parents and maybe had them maybe even look for it. I was going to ask you what more could be done than what's already done about a suspected gun at school.

THE PRESIDENT: These are questions that have also been asked in Colorado because of what was in the website, the kid's website and other places. And I think it's important that people like you, as I said, have a way to make these reports and then you know they're going to be systematically followed up on, either by the school or the law enforcement. I also think it's important that when a young person like that is obviously in trouble, you not only try to get the gun away, but you try to figure out what the real problem is and what kind of help the kids need. And then it's provided in some sort of systematic way. A lot of these kids, I am convinced, could be turned away from this before it's too late if they could have been identified early enough.

And so I think we need a combination of, you know, go after the source of the—go after the

guns and all that, and trying to deal with the kids. And I think—again I would say, I’ve been amazed in how many of these cases—I don’t know what the facts are in Pearl or in Paducah—I do know in Springfield, Oregon, because I went out there to talk to the people there, that there are a lot of people who were really concerned about that young man before this happened.

So I think—we’re going to have a mental health conference with Mrs. Gore and the Vice President, Hillary and I are, in a few days, and we’re going to talk about what more can be done when the kids know that somebody is in trouble, to go really help them before this happens. Just like you knew. There should have been someplace else you could go where you would know not only would they try to get the gun, but there would be somebody all over that kid, in a positive way, trying to figure out what the deal was and how to help him move away from it.

NAOMI: I’m Naomi, from Fairfax, Virginia. And when people were talking about, like the metal detectors, we don’t have that in our school. But I think it’s just—I think kids are kind of being—it makes them uncomfortable. But when you think about it, what else are we supposed to do? I mean, it is happening and the Littleton stuff, I mean, so many people were killed. I mean, you’d think that we’d be able to trust kids and that wouldn’t be happening in schools where you’re supposed to be getting an education, but it is. And I don’t think there’s anything else we can do. I mean, there is, but I think that’s one of the precautions we have to take—is, yeah, we’re taking away some people’s sense of security, but, I mean, that might also be taken away when somebody gets killed, you know?

Q Can we tackle this issue of video games, “Mortal Kombat,” “Doom”—violence in the media? If somebody came to you and said tomorrow, we’re just going to stop the violent video games, we’re just going to cut them out and not do them in this country, what would you all say?

BRANDI: I agree, because if you look at it, I mean, Andy Griffith, for instance, was on for 30 years, you know, and there was nothing wrong with that, with a cop without a gun. You know, there was no violence. But now you’ve got the Roadrunner who dies every episode, bounces back 30 times. (Laughter.) And then you’ve got Mario who jumps off the cliff. Okay, he’s dead, then he come back. Our child is violent because of that. And then you’ve got Barney, you’ve got Teletubbies, Sesame Street.

Society says, okay, they’re homosexual so we can’t show that to our young children. (Laughter.) Like they’re going to know. (Laughter.) Come on, people. (Laughter) -- the shows that are teaching children good morals, but then you got shows up there like Mortal Kombat and something that says, if you want to kill your best friend, here’s your chance. You know, hello, where’s the people who—

Q Do you all think those games desensitize people?

ALBERT: I think they do. I think they definitely do. I mean, when—I have a nephew at home, and my nephew watches cartoons, and now, I look at those cartoons and I’m like, gosh, these are pretty graphic.

Q I’m going to come back at you about that point in a minute. Go ahead.

MISSY: I'm Missy Jenkins from Paducah. And I've noticed like when I watch something like that, something that's like with—you know, it doesn't affect me in any way. But there are some people that are a lot more sensitive. It makes it so much more of a reality to them, that they kind of use that as a way to take care of their problems.

Q Other countries—you know, Japan has maybe more violent video games than we do, more violent videos, and yet, a handful of killings every year by guns. The difference is guns.

THE PRESIDENT: But let's go back to what Missy said. I'm amazed that any of you said you were concerned about the video games, because most of the young people I've talked to, there's a lot of support for tougher gun control and for better security and for more support services, but a lot of young people I've talked to say—they say I'm an old fogey when I talk about the movies and the video games.

But here's the point I want to make. I want to make the point Missy did. Most of the kids are fine and will be fine under any culture. It's true, they show them in Japan and Europe and they don't have the killings. But what do we know about America? We know that in America, number one, we know more and do more of it in the aggregate. The average 18-year-old has seen 40,000 murders, and 200,000 violent instances over the media, number one—more of it.

Number two, in our country our folks work harder, they travel more, they spend less time at home—on average, 22 hours a week—than they did 30 years ago. That's two years by the time you turn 18. Number three, it's easier to get guns.

So if you have vulnerable kids, where the line between reality and fantasy blurs, they are more likely to be influenced by this. And that's something I'd ask the rest of you to be sensitive to, because way over 90 percent of the kids are going to be fine, but it doesn't take many to change people's lives forever in a bad way.

Q I'm going to get a response here from Scott, because I happen to know that Scott is a “Doom” website master.

SCOTT: The problem I feel with basing all this on the violent video games and such, on these few incidents that have happened so far, is I know “Doom” alone has had—almost a quarter of the country has played the game, pretty much. And there's—something like three or four of the people involved in shootings so far have been known to play the game, such as Eric Harris from Littleton, which they've been making a big deal out of that, of him having the website based on “Doom” and making his own add-on levels and such.

And it's just hard, I know, for, like, the entire rest of the people that play computer games—because I've spent the entire portion of this week on line talking to everyone else that I know of to get, like, what their reactions are for all this, and basically everyone just feels that because of these few people it's all, like, we've all become bad guys in the entire situation because of us playing the violent video games and things like that .

STUDENT: I don't think you can blame the video games. I think it's the—I mean, when you get exposed to it you become numb to it but, I mean, the people that are doing it are the people at fault. I mean, they might have some psychological problems, but I don't think you can blame other things.

STUDENT: I think it starts with parenting.

Q But the parent is saying, what can we do?

STUDENTS: I have a question, actually for Mrs.

Clinton. Do you feel that it's a lack of moral values and upbringing in our family that children are lashing out and acting this way? Do you hold the parents accountable for the actions that their children have committed in the Littleton incident, the Springfield incident? Or do you hold the children responsible for their own action, because these children were older than 14 years old?

MRS. CLINTON: Well, I think that's a hard question. I would just answer it like this: I think that our society as a whole has to take a hard look at personal responsibility and I think everyone has to be responsible for his or her own actions, so the individuals who have committed these crimes have to be held responsible. But we have to ask ourselves, what is it that leads a young person to feel so alienated, to feel so much hatred, to have unmet needs—whether they're psychological needs or whatever they might be—that would push them over the brink to do this.

So I think we have to hold people responsible. And I think that something that Bill said is really important—it is just a fact that parents are spending less time with kids—now, that's a fact—than they did 20 or 30 years ago.

STUDENT: The cost of living has gone up, you've got to work.

MRS. CLINTON: People are working harder, people are commuting more hours, people are really unable, they believe, to invest the kind of time that I think you need to invest in raising children.

So there's many social issues. And I hope that this national campaign against youth violence that we're trying to get started here out of the White House is going to give people a chance to be engaged in a real honest conversation about what our priorities are and what we should spend our time doing.

THE PRESIDENT: I'd like to ask a question. How many of you talked to your parents about this within three days of the Littleton shooting? I think that's very important, because one of the things that we don't know—you asked Hillary a hard question about the parents of the children involved—obviously, I don't know them. I've wondered so much. But I think it's important that we understand that a lot of children are strangers in their own homes, and that—including kids that will never commit crimes. And somehow, I think we've really got to do something to rekindle, to give both the kids and the parents the courage to start talking to each other again, because I think it would minimize the chances of those things occurring.

TIFFANY: I have a comment on that. I'm Tiffany from Littleton, Colorado, and I have heard from Robin Anderson that Dylan's parents that day were concerned about him and that they thought something was troubling Dylan, and they said they wanted to talk to him that day after school. They were close with this son; it is not necessarily just his parents. He also did listen to violent music and did play violent video games, but so do many teenage boys. I don't think you can just pinpoint somebody by saying that. And I think that you have to dig deeper

somehow and just make affection more apparent in society and have acceptance and just love. And I don't mean to sound like some hippie or something, but really, that's—I think the root of all of this is everybody just feels so negatively and doesn't know where they have an outlet.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree. Can I ask you one question? I'd like to ask all of you a question about this. And again, all I know about this is what people like you have told me. That is, you know, Hillary and I, we watch the television, we talk to the families of the children that were killed, and some of the young people who are still hurt. But I'd like for all of you to help us with this.

All the reports say that one of the things that drove these two young guys over the edge was that they felt that they were totally disrespected in the school; that they felt that there were groups that looked down on them and badmouthed them and tried to humiliate them; and that as a consequence, they not only wanted to get back at the people they thought had dissed them, but they were looking for somebody to look down on. And that's one of the things that made the African American young man a target.

How many of these kids do you think are violent because they think their contemporaries, kids treat them in a contemptible way?

TIFFANY: I don't think that they were treated that badly. I think that's been overexaggerated in a lot of instances. I think that it was more of like an absence of reality in their mind when they did it, because I don't think they were particularly out after anyone—they randomly shot people just from the lunchroom. I mean, they weren't after anybody in specific.

Q Excuse me, Tiffany. I just want to take a break, let all of our stations know, all of you who are just joining us that we are continuing our two hours live at the White House with President Clinton, Mrs. Clinton, 40 students from around the country talking about kids and guns.

Mr. President, if I could, I've heard people say there is some one thing that people in government and people in politics can do. They can say, we will not take contributions, political contributions, from anybody who is head of a company that puts out a violent movie, a movie that has a lot of shootings in it; we will not take contributions from companies that purvey violent video games; we'll just stop tomorrow. Willing to do it?

THE PRESIDENT: Well, would it have an impact? I don't think so, because then that would increase the relative influence of other people's contributions. I don't know. I think—let me just say this: Our administration has taken on not only the gun issue, we have taken on the entertainment issue ever since '93. And I would like to point out something. Your network and others have adopted a TV rating system, supported the V-chip, which is coming in all the new televisions. The Internet people have helped us with screening technologies for parents, with closing loopholes in the rating systems for the games. I mean, I think there has been some progress here.

I think the real problem we've got in the media is that this violence sells and I think that the rating system for the movies and television is a little too porous there. Again, I think it's more the exposure of young people before the lines between fantasy and reality are fully clarified. That's the one thing that I would say to the young man in the back that defended the "Doom" game.

Look, I like to go to action movies. I love movies. But what happens is, if you look at the aggregate amount of violence—and it's not any one movie, it's the aggregate amount that young people see, and in video games, participate in—by the time they're grown, in their younger years, when they're most vulnerable, they are desensitized to the consequences of violence. There are over 300 studies which show this. This is not a matter of debate.

And I think the question is, what can we do to reduce the volume of violence to which our youngest people are exposed? And that's why we're doing what we can do on this, on the entertainment. But I will say this: the entertainment industry, at least in the beginning, has been more responsive to a lot of these things than the gun industry. Now the gun

manufacturers are coming along, but I think the entertainment industry is going to have to do a lot more, a lot more.

Q But just a quick question. Sony makes the "Doom" game—I don't mean to pick out that one game—but Sony is a huge contributor to the Democratic Party. So you have access to the president of Sony. If you picked up the phone and were talking to him, what would you say to him?

THE PRESIDENT: I would ask him to change the game. And I think that we need to take steps to make sure that younger people don't get it. I think people get this stuff too young. What you say, by the way, is right. Again I will say, most of the people that—you can show them things, they can play games or whatever and they're not going to be affected. But what you have to be sensitive to is if you fill a society with this and you have more kids that are more vulnerable anyway, because they have less supervision at home than in other societies and they have easier access to guns, then you have created a combustible mix which will lead you to more instances of young violence. That's the deal.

That's why—that's the argument I make to the entertainment industry all the time, that's why they should do more. And that's why the gun people should do more. And that's why parents and communities should do more. It's why you should do more to try to help identify children like this.

STUDENT: Then why have we added on to the violence by allowing the "s" word and the "a" word and the "b" word added on to now ABC, NBC, Channel 9, 7, 5? how come we added on to that with the violence on television, with "New York Undercover," "NYPD Blue," and now we allow those people to say those—language, not on just movies from Hollywood, but on our local TV stations now? So we just added on to the problem, so it's just going to keep building and building and building.

And Littleton and Springfield are now—they couldn't take any more and it just crumbled. This is kind of like—people use this as their First Amendment right that we can say this, but we just added on to it.

KATIE: My name is Katie Guthrie, and I live in Reston, Virginia. I just want to say, everybody sitting here, I've just been listening to everybody say everything. It seems like everybody is looking for someone to blame, something to blame—like the video games, the TV shows, the authorities. But nobody is looking at the kids that are doing it. Why isn't anybody saying, what was wrong with these kids, what was going on in these kids' heads? You know, you can't blame a video game and a movie that thousands of other kids play and, like, deal with every single day for one kid that went and did something. You know, I feel like everything is getting stereotyped here.

Q I think that's a good point, Katie, but I think we also have to talk about the fact that there's so many accidental shootings in this country as well, of kids. So we're not just talking about a few troubled kids.

Q I hate to do this. We're going to have to put a "to be continued" on this, because Presidents and First Ladies have schedules.

THE PRESIDENT: Why don't we stay 10 more minutes and listen to the kids? If you'll let them talk. I want to hear from the kids—

MRS. CLINTON: We could stay longer. I want to hear from them. (Applause.)

Q Okay.

JONATHAN: Mr. President, my name is Jonathan Schnerit and I'm from McLean, Virginia, and I attend Langley High School. And it does seem like it's rather hard to attack all of the people and the kids and the violence. But I talked to Senator Howell from the Virginia State Senate yesterday and she addressed gun control and research by Virginia with smart guns. And from what I understand, they're guns in which the owners are the only people who can fire them because of their fingerprints. And it seems like from all these schools that the guns were stolen from their parents or from other places. I was just curious as to how you stand on this topic.

THE PRESIDENT: First of all, I think it's very important. I think that one of the things we've been trying to do and that the gun manufacturers—and I want to say something positive about the people that are trying to help. The gun manufacturers, most of them, have agreed to work with us and now support legislation to require child trigger locks, which will be somewhat helpful. Now, older children can figure out how to undo them, but still they'll save a lot of accidental deaths, and they're important.

Pretty soon, you will have technology available which you can put into the guns that will raise the costs some in the beginning, like all technology does, but like all technology, the costs will come down quickly, which will mean that only people who have the right fingerprints can fire the gun. And that will be a huge thing.

Then, we'll have to do a lot gun buy-back programs and other things in communities that will increase safety, and it's important.

Q Let's hear from people who haven't spoken.

JEN: Well, everybody's trying to think about like try and pinpoint what is causing this, and obviously that is an impossible task. That's why there's so much debate going on here. But with all due respect, have you thought about going on this in a positive manner, such as, along with the background checks, require a safety course to be taken? I mean, hunters are required to take a safety course, so why doesn't everybody else who owns a gun have to take a safety course?

Q We should say, by the way, you have—

JEN: I'm from Bethel Park High School and I'm the co-captain of our rifle team. And I had never shot a gun when I walked into practice the first day. The first thing I learned was safety, safety, safety. And I don't see why the first time anybody else picks up a gun it should be any

different. I mean, even with all these child-proof locks and these fingerprinted guns, there's still accidental deaths. So if parents are taught gun safety, they can instill it into their kids so that all these accidental shootings will not occur. I mean, a lot of—we have some positive legislation—

THE PRESIDENT: It's one thing that I would like to see the NRA do. When I was Governor of my state, I worked with them and they did a lot of very good work on hunter education programs just like you're talking about, and nobody should have a gun that hasn't been trained to use it. You can't get a driver's license unless you can drive a car, and I completely agree with you about that.

Q Chad?

CHAD: I have a question, Mr. President, I was just wondering why semiautomatic guns and automatic guns and automatic guns and semiautomatic rifles and stuff that are obviously not used for hunting purposes are sold in stores. What purpose do they serve?

THE PRESIDENT: No, but I tried to ban them all in 1994, and we were able to ban 19 kinds of assault weapons. But the people who were against what I was trying to do were able to keep some loopholes in the law, one of which we're closing now, to have these big magazines in the guns, you know, the big clips. And a lot of the imported weapons are still legal. So I spent the last five years trying to get rid of all them. I think they should all be rendered illegal. They also grandfathered in those that were in existence before '94, but I think all of them ought to be taken off the markets. That's what I think. And I'm going to try to keep making progress with Congress to do that.

ELIZABETH: Mr. President, I'm Elizabeth Sutton. I'm from Reston, Virginia, and I attend South Lakes High School. And a moment ago, you said that the technology on guns will raise the prices, and you almost sounded like it was a good thing that those prices would go down. They're raising prices on—

THE PRESIDENT: No, it's a good thing they'll go up.

ELIZABETH: I thought you said that they were—you said, of course, it will go down. I don't think they should go down. I think the price should continue to be raised, like cigarettes—they're being raised and raised and raised to encourage kids not to spend their money on something like that. And I think it's really important to raise it as high as you can, to make it almost impossible for kids to get guns, because there's no excuse for any of what's been going on.

THE PRESIDENT: I agree with you. I didn't mean to—I was just pointing out that when we try to get these things through Congress as requirements, that's one of the things that will always be said. But I think it ought to be—I think this identification thing Jonathan mentioned can make a big difference.

ROBERT: Yes, I'm Robert from Woodrow Wilson. And I was wondering about the toy guns, because I've been looking at TV, I notice that children have been accidentally grabbing actual guns that they've mistaken as a toy gun. And I've seen the actual toy gun, and it looks just like an actual gun. What are your opinions on that? Don't you think that something needs to be done about toy guns, too? They look too realistic.

MRS. CLINTON: That's a really good point. I know that toys can be regulated by the Consumer Product Safety Commission, and I'll have—we'll carry this message. I'll ask the people over there to give us a report about that, and see if there's anything further they can do.

Q I'd like to ask, if I could, Marc Kramer, to stand up over there, because you've got a story to tell about somebody in this room—

MARC: Yes I do. My name is Marc Kramer. I'm from Chicago. I attend Mount Carmel High School. I'm representing the Hands Without Guns organization in Chicago. And it's an organization for youth violence prevention.

As a factor in my story, I accidentally shot my best friend with a gun that was very easily put into my possession. And, personally, I'm wondering how you feel personally about the background checks on the purchase of guns. Do you personally believe that background checks can honestly prevent guns from falling into wrong hands?

THE PRESIDENT: Yes, but it can't prevent all of them. That is, it—we have actual numbers on it. We know how many people we've prevented from getting handguns, because they had criminal records, since we've put it in. But there are so many guns, that it doesn't prevent everybody from getting it.

And one of the real problems is, when children are in places where they have easy access to guns, then you can have what happened—you're a brave guy to be here. Where's your friend? Which one's your friend? You want to say something about this?

MICHAEL: Michael Robbins. I just wanted to know, children getting guns these days and whatever, it's easy to obtain a gun now. If you go and tell an authority that someone you know has a gun in your school, how can you protect yourself from being the victim, if that person finds out you told the authorities?

MRS. CLINTON: That's where I think, Michael, the point that the President made earlier about an anonymous hotline, where you could get that information in without even having to leave your name—would that be better?

MICHAEL: Yes.

THE PRESIDENT: See, I went to T.C. Williams High School, right across the river here, where I don't think they have medical—excuse me—metal detectors.

Q It's early. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: It's early. But they have this hotline, they have the student hotline. And if a student there knows that somebody has a gun who shouldn't, they know two things if they call, and both things are important. One is, they know they won't be identified, and two is, they know there will be some responsible person to actually follow up on it. So I think that is something that other schools should consider doing.

Q I've heard of one proposal that schools should be told in advance which homes have guns, so if they spot a troubled kid they know that he's in a home that has a gun. What do you think about that? How would your parents feel about that?

MIKE: My name is Mike Cullen, from Northern Virginia, Fairfax. About what she just said, do you think there's a difference between owning a hunting rifle or a handgun, or is there any

way you could tell beforehand if, you know, the penalty should be more for a handgun or assault rifle? Do you think there should be a bigger punishment?

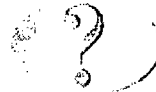
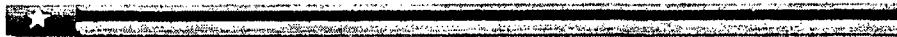
Q And Mike is a hunter.

MIKE: I'm a hunter, by the way. (Laughter.)

THE PRESIDENT: Well, first of all, a lot of avid sports people would tell you that they do some of that with handguns, too. But generally, yes, I think there's a big difference between assault weapons and other weapons. Some people claim they use them for sporting purposes, but no one needs them. And there is a difference between handguns and other weapons, because handguns are used more, they're easier to conceal and they're more likely to be used for illegal purposes and less likely to be used for legal purposes. Therefore, I think it is legitimate to have higher standards on owning them and greater requirements on background checks and greater requirements on whether they should be registered or not. That's what I believe.

Q Mr. President, if I could, we now have the tyranny of the computer and the clock coming. And we can't thank you both enough for joining us, letting us be here this morning. (Applause.) We appreciate it. And we'll take a break. We'll take a break. We'll be right back. (Applause.)

END 8:15 A.M. EDT



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