

Hillary Clinton Seeks New Sex and Violence Ratings

By ADAM NAGOURNEY

OYSTER BAY, N.Y., Dec. 21 — Hillary Rodham Clinton called today for scrapping the existing array of entertainment rating systems and replacing it with a uniform system intended to warn parents about sex and violence in video games, movies, television and music.

Mrs. Clinton, a candidate for Senator from New York, condemned the "culture of violence" that she said infused some video games and other forms of entertainment aimed at children, and said it was a cause of the recent rash of shootings involving teenagers. The first lady said that parents trying to guard their children against such violence or sex in entertainment were being frustrated by the disjointed voluntary rating systems now in use.

"We have an epidemic of violence in our country, and the violence is everywhere," Mrs. Clinton told parents and children at a forum here. "A parent who is a conscientious parent, looking for information about what to do, is totally confused."

To demonstrate her point, Mrs. Clinton began reading the different ratings used for movies, cable television, video games and music. The audience laughed as Mrs. Clinton rambed through the various combi-

nations of letters and numbers.

"The ratings should be the same," Mrs. Clinton said.

In raising the issue, Mrs. Clinton took a page from one of the most successful tactics of President Clinton's 1996 campaign for re-election, in which he embraced issues that captured the interest of middle-class voters, but offered few specific proposals beyond identifying the problem, thus minimizing political risk.

Mrs. Clinton said that she was not endorsing mandatory rating systems that some congressmen have proposed, though her spokesman, Howard Wolfson, later said the first lady was not ruling out supporting such legislation. Instead, Mrs. Clinton said the industry should move to adopt regulations on its own.

Mrs. Clinton's idea came under quick attack. Carolyn Rausch, the senior vice president for the Interactive Digital Software Association, representing manufacturers and publishers of video games, said her group would vigorously oppose such a program.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it," she said. "Consumers are well aware of the existing rating system. Implementing a totally new system, where they have to learn a whole new run of new letters and numbers, will only

lead to confusion."

A spokesman for Mrs. Clinton's likely Republican opponent, Mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani, declined to comment on the first lady's remarks.

At the same event here, Mrs. Clinton also appeared to signal her displeasure with an appellate court's decision to move the trial of four New York City police officers charged with murdering Amadou Diallo from the Bronx to Albany, citing a potentially prejudicial atmosphere. Mr. Giuliani has applauded the decision.

"I think it's unfortunate that the trial, apparently for legal reasons, had to be moved," Mrs. Clinton said during a brief news conference here. She ended the news conference without taking further questions on the topic, and her aides declined to say whether she actually was disagreeing with the court decision.

In her comments on violence, Mrs. Clinton urged more parental involvement to protect their children, saying: "We could save a lot of children's lives if all of us were not embarrassed to call any parent whose child plays with our child and say, 'Do you have guns in your home? And if you do have guns, where do you keep them? Are they under lock and key?'"

She also asked how many people had visited a video arcade. "It's a very revealing and sobering experience," Mrs. Clinton said. "I couldn't help but be upset when I read about the two boys from Columbine being obsessed with the game Doom."

But the first lady found her arguments challenged from an unexpected source — Ben Levine, a poised, 14-year-old student who appeared with her on a panel. He first said that a good student who "really thinks about things before he does them" was not about to be turned astray by a James Bond game. The boy then asked what the Clintons had done to keep tabs on what Chelsea Clinton played, a question that stopped Mrs. Clinton, but only for a moment. "I have to say one of the best things about Bill being president is that she was surrounded by secret Service agents," Mrs. Clinton said.

A moment later, though, Ben returned with a question that seemed to stump even the first lady: "Would you rather have a kid being at a movie that is 'R' rated, or would you rather have him at a party doing drugs, getting drunk and getting arrested?" he asked. Mrs. Clinton acknowledged the question with a smile and a nod. She then called on someone else to speak.

no film uniform
rating
system

VOLUNTARY UNIFORM RATING SYSTEM FOR MEDIA & ENTERTAINMENT

Q&As

Q: Since the First Lady announced her support for a voluntary uniform rating system, what has she done to work towards that goal?

A: The First Lady has asked her staff to synthesize the progress each of the industries have made on meeting the President's challenge of instituting and enforcing rating systems. She has also asked the National Campaign Against Youth Violence to help her convene leaders in the media and entertainment industry to come together for a working session to brainstorm on working toward one voluntary uniform rating system.

The First Lady has a clear track record on pushing the entertainment industry to develop rating systems. She has publicly spoken out against the gratuitous violence in all forms of media and, with the President, has continually challenged the entertainment industry to do more. On June 1st at a Rose Garden event on children, violence, and marketing, the First Lady called for actions that would help parents express authority over the media to which their children are exposed.

Q: What will the Administration do to work with the various industries to develop and implement a uniform rating system?

A: The President has asked the First Lady to work with the National Campaign to convene a meeting of entertainment and media industry representatives to begin discussing the possibility of voluntarily developing and implementing a uniform system.

Q: Does the Administration support the McCain/Lieberman bill, "Media Violence Rating Act of 1999" that they introduced in June 1999?

A: The President and the First Lady applaud Senators Lieberman and McCain for their leadership on this bill, but believe that a uniform rating system should be voluntarily developed and implemented by the industry not by the Federal government.

Q: How have the various media and entertainment industries responded to President Clinton's previous challenges?

A: In his SOTU, the President (will) applaud the industry for the hard work they have done to meet his challenges to develop, implement, and enforce rating systems that include warnings on content and age appropriateness. But, he will also recognize that these systems have become quite complicated for parents and are not easily enforceable. President Clinton has continually stated that the industry must do more. A call for a voluntary uniform rating system is in line with his challenges. (For more detailed information on responses to specific challenges, see attached sheet).

Q: Last year, the President announced that the FTC would be working with the Justice Department on a study to evaluate the marketing of sex and violence to children and that the study would include an evaluation of the effectiveness of the ratings systems. Wouldn't it be better for the President to first know if these new ratings systems are working before advocating an entirely new system?

A: The President is looking forward to reviewing this independent report which the FTC expects to complete by the end of the year. He does not, however, believe that we should wait for the report to be completed before beginning a discussion about simplifying the current system to make ratings more accessible and easily understandable for parents.

Q: The industry has criticized the President and the FTC for the intrusiveness and the expense of the FTC report. If the President is not going to use it to develop an alternative rating system, is it really worth all the expense?

A: This report will inform industry representatives, parents, and policy makers about the extent of the problem that exists both in terms of marketing to children, as well as the effectiveness and enforceability of the rating systems. It will be critical as we move forward in developing and implementing both a simplified system, as well as better understand how to take care in marketing products to children.

THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON
May 14, 1999

Violence -
Movie Ratings

MEMORANDUM FOR THE PRESIDENT

FROM: Bruce Reed
Neera Tanden

RE: Ratings Systems for Different Media

This memorandum provides you with information on the ratings system for media, ranging from movies to software.

Movies: All films are rated by a division of the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). In 1968, the MPAA adopted the Voluntary Movie Ratings System, which advises audiences about the age-appropriateness of films and limits minors' access to films with adult themes. The ratings board is currently composed of eleven members, all employed by MPAA. The Voluntary Ratings System currently provides for five ratings categories: G, PG, PG-13, R and NC-17 (see attached list). The rationale for a particular movie rating is provided in movie ads on the Internet and in newspapers, but not in ads on television. For example, on the Internet, a parents' rating guide is available that describes what aspect of the movie -- e.g., strong language, sexuality, or horror violence -- earned the film its rating.

Movie Advertising and Trailers: All movie advertising is approved or disapproved by the Motion Picture Association of America. The same set of standards that govern movies themselves also applies to advertising for movies that appears in magazines, newspapers, billboards, radio, and television. A different, stricter set of standards governs movie trailers. Trailers are approved for either general audience release ("G" / "PG") or for restricted audience release ("R"). "G" / "PG"-rated trailers are for movies that have been rated either "G," "PG," "PG-13," "R," or "NC-17" by the MPAA. Restricted trailers can play in a theatre only if it is playing an "R," or "NC-17"-rated feature. The approval or disapproval of trailers is based on their suitability for viewing by children. "G" / "PG"-rated trailers cannot show any nudity or drugs, and can only show mild depictions of violence. "R"-rated trailers are less restrictive and can display some depictions of nudity and drugs, as well as some violence (though the act of pointing a gun to a character's head is prohibited).

Television: In 1997, ABC, CBS and most cable networks agreed to display age-based ratings on all television programs except news, sports and unedited movies on premium movie channels. The original ratings system indicated only whether a program was age-appropriate; the system was later modified to include information on whether a program contains violence, sexual content, or explicit language (see attached list). In 1998, the Federal Communications

Commission (FCC) approved the current ratings standards for the V-Chip and ruled that manufacturers have until July 1, 1999 to have the V-Chip installed in 13-inch or larger televisions and until January 1, 2000 for remaining televisions. Parents will be able to program the V-Chip to block programming according to the ratings system (see attached ratings).

Premium Cable Television: In June 1994, four premium cable networks -- Cinemax, HBO, The Movie Channel, and Showtime -- initiated a jointly-developed content advisory system that provides descriptive advisories. This voluntary system was established to provide viewers with information about programming containing violence, sex, and offensive language. Executives in the networks' programming departments are responsible for evaluating the programs. This content advisory system includes descriptive codes, such as "MV" for Mild Violence, "RP" for Rape, "GL" for Graphic Language, and "N" for Nudity (see attached ratings).

Sound Recordings: Record companies voluntarily label some newly released sound recordings with a sticker stating "Parental Advisory: Explicit Lyrics." The label does not further describe the content of the recordings; it does not indicate for example whether the lyrics are explicitly violent, sexual, or profane. The recording industry labeling system is wholly voluntary on the part of record companies, with no oversight or enforcement capability by the RIAA. There are no penalties for not placing the advisory sticker on music products that are explicit, and there are no industry guidelines to determine which music products should be labeled.

Interactive Electronics Games: Two major classification systems for interactive electronic entertainment have been created -- the Interactive Digital Software Association (IDSA) for computer software and the Recreational Software Advisory Council (RSAC) for game devices, such as Nintendo and Sega. IDSA established the Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) as a ratings body for computer software titles. The ESRB classification system has five ratings categories: Early Childhood (EC), Everyone (E), Teen (T), Mature (M), and Adults Only (A). Accompanying these classification labels on title packaging are content descriptors relevant to each category. These descriptors provide consumers with additional content information and in many instances indicate the level of violence or sexual content of the title. Among the descriptors used are the following: Realistic Violence, Realistic Blood, Strong Sexual Content, Use of Tobacco and Alcohol, Mature Sexual Themes.

The Recreational Software Advisory Council Ratings System is the product of a coalition of software companies organized as the Computer Game Ratings Working Group in order to implement a ratings system for game devices. The ratings system developed by the RSAC is based on a five-part classification scale ranging from titles suitable for all audiences to those considered extreme in violent or sexual content and language. The ratings are Level 0, Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, and Level 4. For example, titles considered to have extreme content (Level 4) may contain wanton or gratuitous violence, torture or rape, provocative frontal nudity or explicit sexual activity and graphic language. The RSAC system is based on self-disclosure by the company producing the game.

Online: Unlike other media, a ratings system for the Internet need not be universally applied. In order to protect children from potentially objectionable areas of the Internet, parents can use a

blocking technology to block out all materials that are unrated. Several Internet access providers have already added such parental control technologies to their services. America Online, CompuServe, and Prodigy, for instance, all have systems enabling parents to prevent children from gaining access to any parts of the Internet that the server has not found to be suitable for children. In addition, both Microsoft and Netscape, which together control 97 percent of the web browser market, have implemented a technology in their browsers that allows parents to block material that they deem to be inappropriate. Finally, numerous other technologies are being developed and promoted to enable parents to monitor their children's online activities, set time limits for their children's access online, or let children exchange e-mails only with people on a preapproved list.

Movies Ratings System

G for "General Audiences. All ages admitted."

PG for "Parental Guidance Suggested. Some material may not be suitable for children."

PG-13 for "Parents Strongly Cautioned. Some material may be inappropriate for children under 13."

R for "Restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian."

NC-17 for "No children 17 and under admitted."

Movie Advertising and Trailers:

G/PG: for general audiences. May be displayed before any movie.

R: for restricted audiences. May only be displayed by audiences viewing R- or NC-17-rated movies.

Premium Cable Television

MV for Mild Violence

V for Violence

GV for Graphic Violence

RP for Rape

AL for Adult Language

GL for Graphic Language

BN for Brief Nudity

N for Nudity

AC for Adult Content

SC for Strong Sexual Content

TV Ratings System

The following categories apply to programs designed solely for children:

TVY All Children. This program is designed to be appropriate for all children, including children from ages 2 - 6. This program is not expected to frighten younger children.

TVY7 Directed to Older Children. This program is designed for children age 7 and above who have acquired the developmental skills needed to distinguish between make-believe and reality. Themes and elements in this program may include mild fantasy violence or comedic violence, or may frighten children under the age of 7. Programs containing fantasy violence that is somewhat more intense or combative are designated **TV-Y7-FV**.

The following categories apply to programs designed for a broader audience.

TVG General Audience. Most parents would find this program suitable for all ages. It contains little or no violence, no strong language, and little or no sexual dialogue or situations.

TVPG Parental Guidance Suggested. This program contains material that parents may find unsuitable for younger children and the program may contain one or more of the following: moderate violence (V), some sexual situations (S), infrequent coarse language (L), or some suggestive dialogue (D).

TV14 Parents Strongly Cautioned. This program contains some material that many parents would find unsuitable for children under 14 years of age and may contain one or more of the following: intense violence (V), intense sexual situations (S), strong coarse language (L), or intensely suggestive dialogue (D).

TVMA Mature Audience Only. This program is specifically designed to be viewed by adults and therefore may be unsuitable for children under 17. This program contains one or more of the following: graphic violence (V), explicit sexual activity (S), or crude indecent language (L).

Interactive Electronics Games

Entertainment Software Ratings Board

Early Childhood - Titles rated "Early Childhood (EC)" have content suitable for children ages three and older and do not contain any material that parents would find inappropriate.

Everyone - Titles rated "Everyone (E)" have content suitable for persons ages six and older. These titles may contain minimal violence, some comic mischief (for example, slapstick comedy), or some crude language.

Teen - Titles rated "Teen (T)" have content suitable for persons ages 13 and older. Titles in this category may contain violent content, mild or strong language, and/or suggestive themes.

Mature - Titles rated "Mature (M)" have content suitable for persons ages 17 and older. These products may include more intense violence or language than products in the Teen category. In addition, these titles may include mature sexual themes.

Adults Only - Titles rated "Adults Only (AO)" have content suitable only for adults. These products may include graphic depictions of sex and/or violence.

Recreational Software Advisory Council

LEVEL FOUR

Violence Rating Descriptor: Rape, or wanton, gratuitous violence

Nudity Rating Descriptor: Frontal nudity, amounting to provocative display

Sex Rating Descriptor: Explicit sexual acts or sex crimes

Language Rating Descriptor: Crude, vulgar language or extreme hate speech.

LEVEL THREE

Violence Rating Descriptor: Aggressive violence or death to humans

Nudity Rating Descriptor: Frontal nudity

Sex Rating Descriptor: Non-explicit sex acts

Language Rating Descriptor: Strong language or hate speech

LEVEL TWO

Violence Rating Descriptor: Destruction of realistic objects

Nudity Rating Descriptor: Partial nudity

Sex Rating Descriptor: Clothed sexual touching

Language Rating Descriptor: Moderate expletives or profanity

LEVEL ONE

Violence Rating Descriptor: Injury to human being

Nudity Rating Descriptor: Revealing attire

Sex Rating Descriptor: Passionate kissing

Language Rating Descriptor: Mild expletives

LEVEL ZERO

Violence Rating Descriptor: None of the above, or sports related

Nudity Rating Descriptor: None of the above

Sex Rating Descriptor: None of the above, or innocent kissing, romance

Language Rating Descriptor: None of the above

Representative Rush Holt, whose central New Jersey district is home to seven colleges and universities, has quickly become a leader in the House in putting college within reach of working families. A former teacher himself, Representative Holt has been hard at work in the House Education Committee, fighting for more resources to encourage students and professionals to enter the teaching profession, particularly science and math education, visited more than 60 schools, and has an ongoing task force of educators, students, parents, and financial aid administrators in his district that promote the HOPE scholarship and other programs we're hoping to expand today.

① → verify → deduct
↓

② Pell / loan

③ Study - Ten for
Study