

104TH CONGRESS
2^D SESSION

H. R. 2964

To amend the Communications Act of 1934 to require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a toll free telephone number for the collection of complaints concerning violence and other patently offensive material on broadcast and cable television, and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FEBRUARY 9, 1996

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Commerce

A BILL

To amend the Communications Act of 1934 to require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a toll free telephone number for the collection of complaints concerning violence and other patently offensive material on broadcast and cable television, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Parents Television
5 Empowerment Act of 1996”.

6 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

7 The Congress finds the following:

1 (1) The average American child watches 8,000
2 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television
3 before finishing elementary school.

4 (2) Many of the poorest and potentially most
5 vulnerable groups in our society are the heaviest
6 viewers of television.

7 (3) Television violence is often presented with-
8 out context or judgment as to its acceptability.

9 (4) Most of the violence on television is pre-
10 sented during times when children are likely to be
11 viewing.

12 (5) The 1972 Surgeon General's Report, Tele-
13 vision and Growing Up: The Impact of Televised Vi-
14 olence, found that there was a significant and con-
15 sistent correlation between television viewing and ag-
16 gressive behavior and a direct, causal link between
17 exposure to televised violence and subsequent ag-
18 gressive behavior on the part of the viewer.

19 (6) The 1982 National Institute of Mental
20 Health report, Television and Behavior: Ten Years
21 of Scientific Progress and Implications for the
22 Eighties, found that "violence on television does lead
23 to aggressive behavior by children and teenagers who
24 watch the programs," and that some viewers learn
25 to be passive victims.

1 (7) Numerous other studies establish a causal
2 connection between watching violence on television
3 and increasingly violent behavior of children.

4 (8) There has been a proliferation of television
5 talk shows that, in a race for ratings, air ever more
6 outrageous programs dealing with rape, incest, and
7 other sensitive topics in a manner that seeks to sen-
8 sationalize and shock rather than educate and in-
9 form. Although the impact on the hundreds of thou-
10 sands of children who view these programs has yet
11 to be fully documented, the programs have raised
12 strong concerns among psychologists.

13 **SEC. 3. AMENDMENT.**

14 Title VII of the Communications Act of 1934 is
15 amended by adding at the end the following new section:

16 **“SEC. 714. COMPILATION AND PUBLICATION OF COM-**
17 **PLAINTS CONCERNING VIOLENT PROGRAM-**
18 **MING.**

19 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF FACILITY FOR THE COL-
20 LECTION OF COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS.—The Com-
21 mission shall, within 6 months after the date of enactment
22 of this section, establish a toll-free number for the collec-
23 tion of comments, suggestions, and complaints from the
24 public concerning the transmission by broadcast stations
25 or cable systems of programming containing depictions of

1 violence and other patently offensive material. The Com-
2 mission shall take such steps as may be necessary to pub-
3 licize such number and the Commission's functions under
4 this section.

5 “(b) PUBLICATION OF DATA CONCERNING COM-
6 PLAINTS.—The Commission shall publish in the Federal
7 Register, on a quarterly basis, a summary of the com-
8 ments, suggestions, and complaints received pursuant to
9 subsection (a) during the preceding period. Such summary
10 shall include—

11 “(1) a breakdown of the complaints by broad-
12 cast or cable network and broadcast station, and by
13 program name, date, and time;

14 “(2) an identification, with respect to the 50
15 programs for which the highest number of com-
16 plaints were received, of the production company,
17 the principal advertisers supporting network dis-
18 tribution, the broadcast or cable network and broad-
19 cast station, and the program name, date, and time;
20 and

21 “(3) a statement of observed trends in such
22 complaints as compared with complaints received
23 during prior periods.

1 “(c) AVAILABILITY OF RECORDS.—The Commission
2 shall transcribe the comments, suggestions, and com-
3 plaints received pursuant to this section and shall—

4 “(1) transmit to each licensee any comments,
5 suggestions, or complaints made with respect to its
6 station; and

7 “(2) make the transcribed comments, sugges-
8 tions, and complaints available for public inspection.

9 The Commission shall omit from any records transmitted
10 or made available under this subsection the name and ad-
11 dress of any caller requesting confidentiality.

12 “(d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Commission shall
13 include in each annual report to Congress under section
14 4(k) an analysis of the complaints received pursuant to
15 this section. Such analysis shall include—

16 “(1) an evaluation of whether, consistent with
17 its obligations to serve the public interest and meet
18 the educational and informational need of children,
19 the broadcasting industry has effectively responded
20 to the comments, suggestions, and complaints re-
21 ceived pursuant to this section regarding video pro-
22 gramming containing depictions of violence and
23 other patently offensive material; and

24 “(2) such recommendations as the Commission
25 considers appropriate to secure more conscientious

- 1 fulfillment of those obligations with regard to such
- 2 programming.”.

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