

105TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 1017

To amend the Communications Act of 1934 to require the Federal Communications Commission to establish a toll free telephone number and a computer network site 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

MARCH 11, 1997

Mr. KENNEDY of Massachusetts (for himself, Mr. MORAN of Virginia, Mr. FILNER, Mr. DELLUMS, Mr. GEJDENSON, and Ms. JACKSON-LEE) 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 and a computer network site 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’ Voice in Tele-
5 vision Act of 1997”.

1 **SEC. 2. FINDINGS.**

2 The Congress finds the following:

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

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

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

12 (4) The television parental guidelines were de-
13 vised by the network industry and will be adminis-
14 tered by an oversight monitoring board comprised
15 only of representatives from the industry. Parental
16 and viewer input has been limited. In addition, the
17 broadcast and cable networks and local broadcasters
18 will assign the rating system to programs, thus lim-
19 iting parental and viewer input to focus groups.

20 (5) Numerous other studies establish a causal
21 connection between watching violence on television
22 and increasingly violent behavior of children.

23 **SEC. 3. AMENDMENT.**

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

1 **“SEC. 715. COMPILATION AND PUBLICATION OF COM-**
2 **PLAINTS CONCERNING VIOLENT PROGRAM-**
3 **MING AND TELEVISION RATING GUIDELINES.**

4 “(a) ESTABLISHMENT OF FACILITY FOR THE COL-
5 LECTION OF COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS.—The Com-
6 mission shall, within 6 months after the date of enactment
7 of this section, establish a toll-free number and a computer
8 network site for the collection of comments, suggestions,
9 and complaints from the public concerning—

10 “(1) the transmission by broadcast stations or
11 cable systems of programming containing depictions
12 of violence and other patently offensive material; and

13 “(2) television ratings guidelines established for
14 purposes of the blocking technology described in sec-
15 tion 303(x).

16 The Commission shall take such steps as may be necessary
17 to publicize such telephone number, such computer net-
18 work site, and the Commission’s functions under this sec-
19 tion, including by public service announcements.

20 “(b) PUBLICATION OF DATA CONCERNING COM-
21 PLAINTS.—The Commission shall publish in the Federal
22 Register, on a quarterly basis, a summary of the com-
23 ments, suggestions, and complaints received pursuant to
24 subsection (a) during the preceding period. Such summary
25 shall include—

1 “(1) a breakdown of the complaints pursuant to
2 subsection (a)(1) by broadcast or cable network and
3 broadcast station, and by program name, date, and
4 time;

5 “(2) an identification, with respect to the 50
6 programs for which the highest number of com-
7 plaints were received, of the production company,
8 the principal advertisers supporting network dis-
9 tribution, the broadcast or cable network and broad-
10 cast station, and the program name, date, and time;
11 and

12 “(3) a statement of observed trends in such
13 complaints as compared with complaints received
14 during prior periods.

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

18 “(1) transmit to each licensee any comments,
19 suggestions, or complaints made with respect to its
20 station; and

21 “(2) make the transcribed comments, sugges-
22 tions, and complaints available for public inspection,
23 including inspection at the computer network site es-
24 tablished under subsection (a).

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

4 “(d) REPORT TO CONGRESS.—The Commission shall
5 include in each annual report to Congress under section
6 4(k) an analysis of the complaints received pursuant to
7 this section. Such analysis shall include—

8 “(1) an evaluation of whether, consistent with
9 its obligations to serve the public interest and meet
10 the educational and informational need of children,
11 the broadcasting industry has effectively responded
12 to the comments, suggestions, and complaints re-
13 ceived pursuant to this section regarding video pro-
14 gramming containing depictions of violence and
15 other patently offensive material; and

16 “(2) such recommendations as the Commission
17 considers appropriate to secure more conscientious
18 fulfillment of those obligations with regard to such
19 programming.”.

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