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October 6, 1997

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**Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20554
CS Docket 97-55**

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**FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

**RE: National PTA
Comments on
Revised Industry Proposal
for Rating Video
Programming**

The National PTA, a 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization comprised of approximately 6.5 million parents, teachers and other child advocates in the United States, Europe and the Pacific, is devoted to the involvement of parents related to the education, health and protection of America's children and youth. The association has a long history of working with the television industry and governmental entities urging policies, legislation and regulations that will lead to improved television programming for children and youth.

The National PTA is one of the signatories with other child advocacy, family, health and education associations and television industry groups who approved the "revised industry proposal" that the Federal Communications Commission is requesting comments on. The revised ratings are a result of negotiations between the advocacy groups, including the National PTA, and the television industry and reflects changes to those submitted by the television industry on January 17, 1997. While the revised ratings do not fully represent a ratings system preferred by the National PTA, the revised system does include the addition of program content information and is a compromise that the National PTA deems acceptable to move the ratings systems forward. Therefore, the National PTA urges the FCC to approve the revised TV ratings for television programming as delineated in the FCC Report CS 97-25.

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The National PTA believes, however, that this system is a beginning and should not be considered by the FCC as unchangeable. The National PTA has stated repeatedly that once this system is approved by the FCC, a period of time should be devoted to allowing parents an opportunity to evaluate the system to determine whether it is usable and meets the objective of giving parents some control over what their children watch. On the basis of that input, the National PTA may petition the FCC in the future to recommend improvements in the revised ratings system.

In addition, the National PTA is concerned about those network and cable companies who chose not to use the ratings system approved by the FCC, or in the future may chose to drop out of using the system. While utilization of the approved ratings system is by law voluntary on the part of the television industry, that does not alter the National PTA's position, or parents concern, related to reducing violent programming targeted at children by informing parents about program content. Our agreement with the TV industry representatives was intended to cover ALL networks and cable companies that decided to employ the ratings system, and "to urge governmental leaders to allow this process to proceed unimpeded by pending or new legislation that would undermine the intent of this agreement or disrupt the harmony and good faith of this process." This provision does not apply to those stations not using the ratings system. The National PTA's approval of the revised rating system should in no way restrict National PTA's freedom to pursue alternative avenues, voluntary or legislative, that will equip parents with the means to have some control over the TV programming their children watch.

The National PTA appreciates this opportunity to submit comments.

Sincerely,



Lois Jean White,
National PTA President



Shirley Igo,
National PTA Vice-president for Legislation

Encls: "National PTA Reaches Consensus on TV Ratings: Next Step is For
Parents to Decide"



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July 10, 1997

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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NATIONAL PTA REACHES CONSENSUS ON TV RATINGS: NEXT STEP IS FOR PARENTS TO DECIDE

Washington, D.C.—The National PTA, accompanied by leaders from other child advocacy organizations, said in a meeting at the White House today that it supports a newly-revised television rating system. The system was developed in conjunction with the television industry.

“This is an historic occasion because it is the first time that parents and industry leaders have had a chance to come together and discuss their views on programming,” said Lois Jean White, National PTA president.

“While the system is not as specific and complete as we had hoped, it does provide content information which the original system did not,” she said.

“America’s families will be now the ultimate judges of its effectiveness.” She added that the National PTA will work with its partners to educate the public and parents about the v-chip and the TV Parental Guideline System.

Under the revised guidelines, the letters “S,” “V,” “L,” and “D” will be added to the age-based ratings that were introduced at the beginning of the year. These letters are designed to help parents identify why programs have been rated the

way they have—whether due to sexual content, violence, language or suggestive dialog. A special “FV” descriptor will be used to identify “fantasy violence” in programs designated for children age 7 and older. News and sports shows will remain unrated.

“Once the ratings system has been in operation long enough to evaluate its effectiveness, there will be an independent review to see if it meets parents’ needs,” White said.

The National PTA and other advocacy groups have been negotiating with the industry for a month in an effort to reach accord on the ratings issue. Networks will begin using the new universal television ratings system by October 1.

The National PTA, founded in 1897, encourages its more than 6.5 million members to be involved in key child education and welfare issues. The organization serves as an advocate for children and families in schools, the community and before government agencies.

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