

May 12, 2010

Chairman Julius Genachowski
Commissioner Meredith Attwell Baker
Commissioner Mignon Clyburn
Commissioner Michael J. Copps
Commissioner Robert McDowell
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: *Empowering Parents and Protecting Children in an Evolving Digital Landscape*
MB Docket No. 09-194

Dear Chairman Genachowski and Commissioners Baker, Clyburn, Copps and McDowell:

In its recent Notice of Inquiry on the timely topic of *Empowering Parents and Protecting Children in an Evolving Digital Landscape*, the Commission opened a review of the parental control technologies available for media. We, the undersigned, support this effort and write to raise an important opportunity to protect America's children from the negative impact of illegal drugs, smoking and alcohol abuse.

As you are aware, there is substantial evidence that suggests that children who view depictions of smoking, illegal drug use and alcohol abuse in media are more likely to engage in such behaviors themselves.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops¹ recently reported findings of a national survey that found parents are as concerned about media portrayals of illegal drug use and alcohol abuse as they are about violence, sexual content and profane language. They also report high levels of concern about portrayals of smoking in media. Yet portrayals of illegal drug use, alcohol abuse and smoking are often not included in ratings and blocking systems that traditionally include violence, sex and profane language.

We encourage the Commission to act on this important data from America's parents, who clearly are concerned about their children's exposure to illegal drugs and alcohol abuse. Our nation's transition to digital television (DTV) offers an excellent opportunity to provide children with additional protection. DTV allows for updates to existing TV content ratings and the addition of new ratings. We strongly encourage the Commission to promote the creation of new ratings that would allow parents to block programs that portray illegal drug use, alcohol abuse and smoking.

¹ Comments of United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Docket No. 09-194, Feb 24, 2010 at 4

Sincerely,

American Legacy Foundation
Children Now
Coalition for Independent Ratings
Disciples Justice Action Network
Islamic Society of North America
Mothers Against Drunk Driving
National Council of Churches
Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ
Partnership for a Drug-Free America
Seventh Day Adventist Church
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops