

I believe that the FCC should stop end its regulation of broadcast content altogether. Regulation of so-called "obscene", "indecent", and "profane" content is akin to censorship, violating the First Amendment rights of broadcasters everywhere in the name of protecting viewers from the danger of seeing content they (or their parents) may not wish to. But that is a danger that is becoming increasingly non-existent. With the proliferation of DVR's, online viewing, and on-demand, viewers are well-aware of what they are going to see in a given program before they watch it. Additionally, many cable boxes now have a "guide" feature, which allows one to see information about the programs on every channel before they tune to it. As these features become more and more commonplace, the paradigm of "channel-surfing" is coming to an end. Viewers can easily determine if a program is appropriate for them or for their children before watching it.

Content regulations also give cable and subscription networks a competitive advantage over broadcast. Because their content is unregulated, these networks can make programs that deal with more mature, complex themes, where network shows have to be much more broadly pitched. These mature programs, like "Mad Men", "Breaking Bad", "Game of Thrones", and many more are becoming a much bigger part of our culture, and the broadcast networks can't compete. Their ratings have been shrinking for years.

The FCC should let broadcasters decide what their content limits should be. The marketplace will determine what kinds of content Americans consider to be appropriate. Shows that viewers find too offensive will be at a loss for viewers and advertising dollars. This change will grant broadcasters the rights that they deserve under the Constitution, rights that are long overdue.

In addition, I would propose adding a short ratings bumper before the viewing of programs on any device, be it regular broadcast, online, or on demand. This bumper could include the TV Parental Guideline rating, as well as outline the specific content that will be in the upcoming program, similar to what HBO does with all of their programs now, and what many cable networks do with TV-MA programs. This bumper will make it much easier for viewers and parents to determine which programs to watch, much easier than the current system of simply displaying the rating in the upper-left corner of the screen.