

August 2, 2013

Ms. Marlene H. Dortch
Secretary

Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

RE: GN Docket No. 13-86

Dear Ms. Dortch:

I am writing to you today in response to the above-referenced proceeding, which was launched by the FCC to examine “whether the full Commission should make changes to its current broadcast indecency policies or maintain them as they are.”

I am writing as Executive Director of TV Watch, a broad-based coalition that opposes government control of TV programming and promotes the use of tools like content ratings and parental controls. TV Watch educates parents about existing tools to manage their families’ TV viewing and gives a voice to the majority of Americans who prefer personal responsibility to government regulation.

Specifically, I wish to provide some chronological context to a debate that is, in too many cases, consumed by misinformed and antiquated information. Also included is data relating the views of parents about the tools available to help them monitor the content consumed by their children and enforce their rules.

Those who continue to single out broadcast television are aggressively fighting a 20th century battle when cable was first arriving on the scene and tablets and smart phones were unheard of.

When the landmark Pacifica decision was delivered in 1978, the average household had access to five or six channels with major broadcast networks accounting for 70 to 90 percent of television viewing.¹ There were 72.9 million television households but only 12.9 million cable subscribers.² Today, the number of options has exploded for the American family in the United States with 84.5 million cable subscribers³ having access to more than 285 channels.

The delivery options for consuming television programming have increased as well - far beyond the television set itself. 162 million Americans watch online videos, averaging 5.9 hours per person each month, and 61 percent of mobile subscribers in the United States use smartphones.⁴ More than one billion users view content on YouTube, NetFlix has 29 million subscribers and 38 million people watched Hulu last year.

Despite this evolution, the process has been influenced for years by groups who look at television from a 20th rather than 21st century perspective. They rely on faulty methodology and subjective analyses to press their agenda with lawmakers, raise money for their organizations and push their personal viewpoint as it relates to television content. These are the same groups who drive the majority of FCC complaints, including more than 99 percent of all complaints in 2003 and 2004. One such group took credit in June of this year for manipulating the complaint process stating in a fundraising email that they had “initiated a tidal wave of public pressure on the FCC.”⁵

The reality, however, is that only one-third of American television households have children under the age of 18⁶ and the evolution of television and technology allows parents in those homes to control content they might find inappropriate for their families before it hits the screen while, at the same time, giving parents the ability to set their “grown-up” preferences. TV Watch commissioned a poll⁷ that found:

- Seventy-nine percent of parents believe it is NOT the role of government officials to decide television content.
- Seventy-three percent of parents monitor what their children watch, including 87 percent of parents whose children are ages 0-10.
- Sixty percent of parents disagree with the statement: “The current parental controls and ratings systems have failed. It’s time for government to step in and do more.”
- Eighty Six percent of parents believe that more parental involvement is the best way to keep kids from seeing what they shouldn’t see on television.
- Fifty-seven percent of parents sit with their children while they watch television.

Our findings have been affirmed by the research of other parties as well. Most recently, the TV Parental Guidelines Monitoring Board, a group comprised of both networks and third parties, delivered key findings of a survey⁸ that showed:

- 72 percent of parents report having rules about TV use.
- 68 percent of parents say they use the TV ratings system.
- 88 percent of parents are aware that the TV ratings system provides guidance based on the age of the child.
- 36 percent of parents use either a V-Chip or cable/satellite-provided parental controls.
- 95 percent of parents who use the ratings most often find them helpful.

These findings are consistent with a January 2012 poll released from Rasmussen Reports⁹ that showed:

- Among those with children at home, 60 percent say the current TV rating system is an effective way to warn users.
- 73 percent of those with children at home say the rating has an impact on their decision to watch the show (makes them more or less likely to watch it).

For years parents have made clear they do not want the government making decisions that are best left in their hands. At the same time, parents often want and need assistance to help them

make decisions about what their children watch based on the age of the child and the family's tastes and values. For that reason, the television program ratings were created giving parents specific information about the content and age appropriateness of television shows, the V-Chip is installed in nearly every television, and cable and satellite providers now offer parental controls. All have proven to be valuable assets for families.

Sincerely,



Jim Dyke
Executive Director
TV Watch

¹ "The Evolution of TV Viewing," John Carey, Professor of Communications & Media Management at Fordham University

² "TV Facts" by C. Steinberg [1980], and "2001 World Almanac

³ Multimedia Research Group, Inc., Q4 2012

⁴ The Nielsen Company, "State of the Media: U.S. Consumer Usage Report"

⁵ Parent's Television Council Email, June 3, 2013

⁶ Television Audience Report 2010-2011 - Nielsen

⁷ Luntz, Maslansky Strategic Research, Hart Research, June 2007

⁸ Public Opinion Strategies and Hart Research Associates, April 2012

⁹ Rasmussen Reports, LLC, January, 2012