

Written Testimony of

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Before

**The U.S. Senate
Commerce Committee**

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Chairman Inouye, Co-Chairman Stevens, Members of the Senate Commerce Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to talk about the issue of television violence. I ask that my full written testimony and attachments be submitted for the record.

I approach this issue from a professional, personal and civic perspective. Professionally, as President of Entertainment of Fox Broadcasting, I am charged with putting on the air a diverse slate of programming.

Personally, as a parent, I ensure that the shows watched by my 13-year old daughter, Susannah, and 15-year old son, Jackson, are appropriate for their age and their maturity level.

Finally, as a citizen, I am deeply concerned about the problem of violence in our society. At the same time, I am committed to the First Amendment right to free speech.

We at Fox take seriously our responsibility to inform viewers about our content. We have a large department of Broadcast Standards professionals whose job it is to ensure that our shows comply with the law and our own stringent internal standards. These Standards professionals are involved at every step in the development, production and broadcast of our entertainment programming. They meticulously

review more than 500 hours of programming and tens of thousands of commercials a year. They are also responsible for rating each episode of every show, providing both an age-based rating (such as TV-PG or TV-14) and content descriptors where necessary ("S" for sexual content, "L" for language, or "V" for violence).

These ratings are shown at the start of every program on our air, and after each commercial break. When appropriate, we also place an additional, full screen advisory at the start of the program to provide a warning to parents to pay close attention before they allow their kids to tune in. On the poster in the front of the hearing room, we have a visual depiction of what the ratings bug and advisories look like for Fox's 24. Note that the advisory is also provided through a voiceover, in this case by the star of 24, Kiefer Sutherland.

We also air public service announcements as part of an industry-wide media campaign that urges parents to take charge of their children's TV viewing. In the posters in front of you are pictures of one of the PSAs and a print ad. The PSAs run during prime time in some of our most popular shows, like *American Idol*. This PSA campaign refers parents to a website – thetvboss.org – where we provide detailed information about parental controls and the TV rating system.

We take all these steps to help parents make informed viewing decisions. And we are always striving to improve our safeguards. As we speak, the industry is looking at ways to improve the consistency of the TV ratings system. Monthly, we at Fox review our Standards & Practices systems to ensure that we are adjusting to an ever-changing media environment.

Beyond our civic duty, we do this because it's good business. Our goal is twofold: to draw viewers by providing shows they want to see and keep them by giving them programming they expect to see. It does us no good to surprise parents with inappropriate content because such surprises could impact future Fox viewing.

Teamed with our efforts, parents have a host of technical and informational tools at their disposal, including the V-chip, cable and satellite parental controls and third-party rating tools. And, above all, let's not forget the most effective and widely-used tool: parents' individual discretion. (*See Attachment 1.*)

The Kaiser Family Foundation last week released a survey which found that two-thirds of parents monitor their children's media use. Clearly, monitoring is as natural and simple as other daily parental tasks such as telling kids to look both ways before crossing the street,

encouraging them to wear sunscreen, or telling them to eat their vegetables.

Given the inherent difficulty of defining violence and drawing lines about what is appropriate, any attempt to regulate the depiction of violence seemingly would be found unconstitutional. And it would have a profound chilling effect on the creative community's ability to produce authentic programming reflective of the world we live in.

Let me be clear: I share your concern about violence in our society. But there isn't an easy solution. The studies on the relationship between TV violence and violence in young people are clear. Three reports produced by our government - the Surgeon General, the FTC, and the FCC - have concluded that, while there may be a CONNECTION between television and violence, there is no CAUSAL link. This distinction is critically important. Without a causal link, we cannot justify imposing content limits on the media. (See Attachments 2 and 3.)

Should we as parents, nonetheless, do our jobs to minimize our kids' exposure to violent television? ABSOLUTELY. But this is the job of parents, not the government.

In closing, parents have the information, the tools and, above all, the responsibility to decide which television shows are right for themselves and their children. We believe we should keep it that way.

(See Attachment 4.)

Attachments to Written Testimony:

- 1. – Adam Thierer, Progress and Freedom Foundation, "The Right Way to Regulate Violent TV" (2007).**
- 2. – Professor Jonathan Freedman, "Television Violence and Aggression: Setting the Record Straight" (2007).**
- 3. – Professor Jonathan Freedman, "Inquiry on the Effects of Televised Violence: What Does the Scientific Research Show?" (2004).**
- 4. – "From Kalamazoo to Chicago, Americans voice their opinion: Keep the FCC Away from My TV!" Top Editorials from around the nation.**