

Remarks of Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
At PointSmart. ClickSafe. Internet Safety Summit
Washington, D.C.
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(As prepared)

Thank you all for being here to discuss what has become one of the most important issues facing children and families today. I would like to extend a special thanks to Kyle McSlarrow, April Delaney, Marsali Hancock, and Doug Levin for their work in organizing this event.

In this age of communications convergence, in which platform competition has become a reality, we see a digital world in which most Americans rely on their cell phones far more than their landlines—a complete reversal from just ten years ago. Video can be streamed on your TV, computer, in your car or on a mobile device -- truly a revolution in the use of communications technology. Today, 1 in 6 American households have only wireless phones; that's up from 1 in 8 in 2006. Landlines comprised 43% of all telephone lines in 2006, and are expected to make up only 33% by 2010.

The effects of this reach beyond the telephone industry. For example, advertisers are taking note of this new way to reach consumers. According to a March 2008 Nielsen report, 23% of U.S. mobile phone users had seen ads on their cell phones in the last 30 days.

We're also seeing cable operators gain a growing share of the telephone market. Cable companies had an estimated 8% of all telephone lines in 2007 and they are expected to have 14% by 2010.

As for television, major broadcast networks are now offering many shows online. One-fifth of viewers who watched the premiere of NBC's "The Office," watched it online. 3.7 million online viewers watched CBS's coverage of March Madness this spring.

Video-sharing continues to explode. Sixty-three percent of U.S. broadband homes report watching video at home or at work. Today YouTube consumes more bandwidth than the entire Internet did in 2000 -- 100 million video streams every day. Streaming video and music distributed via Internet, IPTV network or mobile handset will generate \$70 billion in revenue in the next six years.

Today's generation of young people grew up with the Internet; they receive phone, video games, and Internet from the same provider, on the same device. All of these new and exciting services and products also bring challenges and even risks—risks to our personal information and data, our privacy, our security, and perhaps most importantly, our children.

Our children are indeed our country's most valuable natural resource, and we should treat them as such. In order to ensure they reach their greatest potential, we must ensure that they have access to a wealth of educational information in an environment that protects their physical safety, their healthy mental development and emotional and sociological well-being.

I. Internet Safety

Everyone here is familiar with the Dateline series "To Catch a Predator." I recently watched some of these episodes and even though I am out speaking on the topic, I was shocked to see the number of, and persistence of, predators who stalk under-age children online. The statistic I often cite, along with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children and many state attorneys general, shows 1 in 7 children have

been solicited online. Someone suggested the statistic takes into account non-aggressive contacts from persons who may never follow up or suggest an in-person meeting. For truly, “aggressive” approaches by Internet predators, they say the numbers are 1 in 25 children. However, those investigators on the front lines of this battle, such as Arlington County Special Victims Unit Lieutenant, Brett Butler, say the numbers may be even worse than 1 in 7. However, to me, statistics are not the story--- whether it is 1 in 7, 1 in 25, or 1 in 100-- online predators are a very real threat to the safety of our children, and I am committed to trying to do something about it. For this generation, the I-Generation, the Internet is no longer just an infrequently-accessed research tool, but a ubiquitous aspect of daily life. I believe that we all—parents, industry, government—should do what we can to protect children in the online world—just as we continue to protect them in our neighborhoods, schools, and homes. What we once considered and described as a “virtual world” is in essence our children’s real world.

How much time do children spend online? A 2007 Pew study shows that 28% of online teens have created their own blog. Twenty-seven

percent maintain their own webpage. Thirty-nine percent share their own artwork, photos, stories or videos online. Forty-one percent of teens who use MySpace, Facebook, or other social networking sites send messages to their friends everyday through these sites — while only 22% of teens send messages via email everyday.

With the explosion of new educational materials available online, one might think parents would be 100% pleased with the internet's role in their children's lives. But surveys show just the opposite: a late 2006 survey that showed 59% of parents think the Internet has been a good thing for their children--- down from 67% who thought it was good in 2004. Parents, and I am one of them, are beginning to understand the very real dangers associated with Internet use.

Another concern the Internet has brought to light is the presence of, and market for, child pornography. Child pornography, most of which is distributed via the Internet, is a multi-billion dollar per year industry. Seventy-nine percent of unwanted exposure to pornography occurs in the home. There are more than 4 million pornographic websites or 12% of all websites. The proliferation of child pornography is real and without

appropriate government, industry, and parental oversight it will likely continue to grow.

In addition to these concerns is the problem of cyber-bullying, most recently brought to light in the wake of the tragic death of a young teenage girl who took her own life after being taunted online. I-safe reports that 42% of children have been bullied online, and 1 in 4 has had it happen more than once. Just last week, the Department of Justice held a press conference as part of Internet Safety Month, and outlined the steps parents and children can take to reduce the risk of cyberbullying.

I am desperately interested in this problem, both as a mother of three, including a college-aged daughter, and a policymaker who sees this not merely as a technology issue but as a very real health threat to the safety and well-being of our children.

II. Benefits and Risks of Internet

The Internet and broadband have brought the world to our children. With a click of a mouse, they have access to information about almost anything, and in almost any format. Broadband and the internet have improved our access to healthcare, is the driver of all types of commerce

and obviously have enhanced communications around the globe. The opportunities are endless. I, like many parents across the country, never really thought past beneficial opportunities the Internet offers. Today, however, I realize that this technology also presents challenges and dangers.

Parenting is a hard job, and it just got harder. Turning off a television, or taking it out of a bedroom, may take some gumption, but overseeing every avenue that a child can walk down on the Internet is daunting. As parents, none of us would allow our children to leave the house without knowing where they're going; yet many parents allow their children to explore the Internet without any discussion, education, or recognition of the very real dangers that cyberspace poses. Too many of us have been laboring under the myth that the Internet is a "safe place" for our children. Through discussions like the one we are engaging in today, and the many organizations represented here, we can help parents, teachers, and all caregivers be more aware of their children's online activities, and be able to talk to their children about what they access across multiple platforms.

Yes, I believe parents have a responsibility to parent. However, parents need to be educated. As the source of an endless highway of information and entertainment, I hope that cable and Internet providers—including mobile and wireless operators—will assist families in educating their children about the dangers of the Internet, especially the potential dangers of online chatting and posting personal information on blogs and social networking sites. I have been pleased to see members of the industry, many of you here today, take initial steps toward this goal.

III. Partners

Last year I attended the launch of the Family Online Safety Institute headed by Stephen Balkham at Kaiser Family Foundation. The Institute is committed to innovative, industry-driven solutions, and bringing together the many pre-existing parental education programs to figure out what works- and what doesn't. Perhaps the most encouraging point about this organization is its supporters: companies like AOL, AT&T, Verizon, Microsoft, and Cisco.

I participated in the Cox Communications' National Teen Summit along with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Fifteen

high school students from Cox communities nationwide participated in discussions on Internet safety and behavior led by children's advocate John Walsh and Miss America 2007, Lauren Nelson. Just last week, Verizon Chairman and CEO Ivan Seidenberg told attendees at the International Stop Cyberbullying Conference at Pace University that online threats to privacy and security, as well as to the mental and physical well-being of Internet users, should be of paramount concern to those in the online industries, law enforcement, educators, parents, and young people, and that together, through dialogue and action, everyone can make the Internet the empowering and safe environment everyone envisions.

As the FCC reviews our own policies and the Internet continues to evolve, I am especially concerned about P2P applications, particularly the growing problems of illegal content distribution, from online child pornography to pirated movies and music, as well as the issue of child online safety and privacy in general. I am encouraged by the efforts of the recently formed P4P working group- where P2P companies and ISPs are working together to resolve network management issues to foster legal content distribution. I look forward to even more collaborative, industry-

based solutions, which are often the most effective and efficient means of resolving complex, technical network disputes rather than government intervention or regulation.

IV. International

And Internet safety isn't just a concern for America's families—it's becoming an international issue as well. In just the last few months, I've been asked to speak at APEC-Tel, the Asian Pacific Telecom Ministers in Bangkok; at the Global Forum in Italy; and with Secretary General Hammadoun Tourre of the ITU who, I am thrilled to report, has begun to raise the issue in Geneva with the council of member nations of the ITU. I have also been in discussions with the Ministers of Japan, Australia, and Viet Nam and am pleased to report that they have various initiatives ongoing. Japan is now issuing notices urging parents and schools to limit internet-accessible cell phones to children. They have recommended that Japanese cell phone manufacturers develop phones with GPS and talk capabilities only. DOCOMO, the largest Japanese wireless provider, has undertaken an internet-safety curriculum and actually sends instructors into schools to provide instruction. Given the fact that approximately 60%

of American teens have a cell phone, and that cell phones are being marketed to children as young as 6, I hope that our U.S. carriers will adopt similar voluntary initiatives.

I believe that each of these initiatives –from domestic to international - is having a positive impact. But there is much more to do; more families to reach, more children to educate and protect. In recent years, we've experienced tightened security at our airports, our schools, and many of our offices. The government requires E-rate fund recipients to install filters, screens, and other blocking mechanisms on school computers, and local zoning laws for years have prevented bars and liquor stores from operating near schools. As our world changes and new threats emerge, we must respond appropriately. "Don't talk to strangers" is as applicable today as it was 30 years ago – only more frightening because the 45-year-old criminal can pretend to be a cute 15-year-old boy. And "pretexting" is just a nice word for dangerous "predatory" behavior.

Certainly the Internet enables our children to broaden their educational, social and geographic horizons beyond our wildest dreams. Let's just make sure they have the tools and the knowledge to protect

themselves in their new and very real, digital, wireless, instantaneous, online world. Let this be what unites you all. Thank you for your presence here today; whether from healthcare, law enforcement, the communications industry, or children's advocacy, we all have a role to play. Thank you all for exhibiting your concern and commitment to this issue; American's families; and our future.