

**Remarks of Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
To the National Religious Broadcasters Media Summit
September 17, 2008**

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to speak with you today. It has been an incredible journey since I first met with your leadership team here in DC in September 2006- and last March at Opryland in Nashville. We have seen markets expand, and technological innovations, applications, and devices emerge, all resulting – even in this time of economic slowdown – in explosive growth. E-commerce, e-health, and e-government make us all more productive, safer, and healthier—and set the stage for billions of dollars in investment. The FCC has been at the forefront of leveling the playing field to encourage cross-platform competition and technology-agnostic regulation. Our big screen TVs now show our telephone messages, our wireless phones now function as mini-movie theaters, and our PCs are, well, basically all of the above.

Americans have more choices in devices, applications, internet and broadband providers in a cross-platform, digital, virtual world anytime, anywhere. There are over 260 million cell phone users in the US; wireless now outpaces wireline; cost is down, minutes of use are up, and can you imagine that “ringtones” are a \$3 billion dollar business worldwide. At the same time, all of this innovation comes at a price. We have unfortunately

watched the continued increase of coarse language, sex, and violence during what used to be a family TV viewing hour. And the risks that our children face in the online world are just as dangerous and real as those faced in the offline world. From predators to pornography to cyber-bullying. The very innocence of childhood is disappearing in cyberspace. And the effects are felt not just by our children, but also by our economy. Piracy costs our musicians and creative talents over \$12.5 billion per year, one in three teens have been victims of cyberbullying—and our children are being solicited online everyday.

I would like to discuss several topics that continue to be at the top of my personal agenda—and hopefully are at the top of yours as well: broadcast decency, internet safety, and childhood obesity. I have spent my entire professional life working on issues such as these that affect children and families across our country—and around the world. I always welcome opportunities to visit with groups that share my concerns. Thank you for all that you, as broadcasters, are doing to provide clean, wholesome, healthy, educational, safe programming for America's children.

I. Broadcast Decency

The messages that children receive through the media have a great influence in their lives. As you may know, the Kaiser Family Foundation

found that American children and adolescents spend 22 to 28 hours a week watching television. Even during the “family hour,” a 2007 study found that 75% of the programs aired contained foul language, and 90% of the programs contained some type of objectionable content. A Zogby poll found that 79% of respondents thought that television contained too much sex, violence, and coarse language. I can think of no other national issue on which there is this level of agreement. Americans want family-friendly programming and I applaud the NRB members that have created more family-friendly choices.

Your decision to offer wholesome programming is not just good for families; it’s also good for the bottom line. Consider, for example, that in this time of economic decline, Disney’s stock has actually increased in value over the last two years. And then there’s Disney Channel’s “High School Musical 2,” which was the most watched cable program of all time with 10 million viewers. The Hallmark Channel, which only shows G-rated programming, is in the Top Ten cable networks nationally. Therefore, I continue to call on producers, writers, and even CEOs, to listen to American families.

It is important to note here that every local broadcaster has the right to reject programming deemed inappropriate based on local community

standards. The FCC must continue to enforce the statutory regulations passed by Congress which says that “Whoever utters any obscene, indecent, or profane language by means of radio communication shall be fined under this title or imprisoned not more than two years, or both.” 18 U.S.C. § 1464.

I want to thank you all again for your support of the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act of 2005, which raised the maximum fines from \$32,500 to \$325,000. We at the FCC must remain vigilant in enforcing these rules.

II. Internet Safety

Another issue I continue to champion—at home and abroad—is the issue of Internet Safety. The explosion of the Internet over the past 10 years has changed the way we live. For this generation, the I-generation, the Internet is no longer just an infrequently-accessed research tool, but a ubiquitous aspect of daily life. What used to be a “virtual world” is now our children’s very real world- 24/7. A 2007 Pew study showed that 28% of online teens have created their own blog, 27% maintain their own webpage, and 39% share artwork, photos, and videos online—many of very personal information. While the Web certainly offers our children an incomprehensible amount of educational information, we too often labor under the myth that the Internet is a “safe place.” Shows such as Dateline’s “To Catch a Predator” illustrate the very real and present dangers that

children face online. Many cite a statistic that shows 1 in 7 children have been solicited online. A few have suggested that this statistic accounts for non-aggressive solicitations, from predators that do not follow up or try to arrange a meeting, and that only 1 in 25 children have encountered “aggressive” solicitations. Personally, I don’t care if it’s 1 on 7, or 1 in 25—it’s one child too many. We must give parents and children information not only about the potential dangers, but also the tools available to protect themselves.

In addition to the problem of internet predators, is the growing issue of cyber-bullying. This problem was recently brought to light when a teenage girl took her own life after she had been taunted online. I-Safe reports that 42% of children have been bullied online, and 1 in 4 children have been bullied more than once. A report released last month by the Rochester Institute of Technology shows that cyber-bullying begins in 2nd grade. Among 7th-9th graders, 60% say a “friend” was the source of cyber-bullying. In June, the Department of Justice held a press conference, and outlined the steps parents and children can take to reduce the risk of cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying is not merely a technology issue, but a real threat to our children’s safety. We need to make sure that parents and children have the tools to protect themselves in the digital world.

Last week I suggested and challenged the wireless industry to become more involved in this issue as they become a gateway to the Internet. With 5.3 million “tweens” having cell phones, and the fact that they are now marketed to preschoolers, wireless companies have a responsibility to come to the table and discuss this growing concern.

III. Childhood Obesity

Finally, I would like to talk to you about childhood obesity. Today in America, ten million children are obese or at risk of becoming obese. As I have said before, no one group or individual can solve the childhood obesity epidemic—it’s a national health problem, and growing budgetary issue, that will require a national solution. Unlike so many other health issues facing our nation, this is one that can be solved.

As a “humble regulator,” I was concerned that some might see my involvement as overly regulatory. However, as I read the Institute of Medicine’s study which found that “Today’s children may be the first generation that does not outlive their parents,” I felt a real calling. How could I sit by with 10 million children being affected, a true national health crisis of epidemic proportions, and not speak out? And it is not just the health implications that are troubling. In this age of skyrocketing healthcare costs, we are facing the very real threat of providing medical care to an

entire generation that will suffer formerly adult diseases, in their teenage years. Medicaid already expends nearly \$6.5 billion on obesity-related diseases in just New York and California. And in California alone, it is estimated that total medical costs related to obesity are almost \$7.7 billion.

In order to combat this epidemic we need leadership, and not just from the medical field, the government, or the schools -- but from the media—who spend approximately \$2 billion annually on advertisements targeting our children. \$376 million is directed to teens. \$99 million is spent by carbonated beverage companies, and \$69 million by candy and frozen desserts. The Kaiser Foundation has found that children under 4 or 5 years of age cannot distinguish between advertisements and programming. It takes children another 3 years to understand that advertising is designed to persuade. The UK and a few other nations have already banned advertising to kids. I have and will continue to call on the media to balance advertising—to use this incredible medium for positive lifestyle messaging and to only use licensed characters for “healthier” foods.

The fact that children cannot discern between advertisements and programming, along with the prevalence of unhealthy food and a trend toward more sedentary lifestyles, have all contributed to the childhood obesity epidemic. In spite of this bad news, I am glad that to report that the

industry is beginning to step forward and be part of the solution. Along with two of my FCC colleagues, and two U.S. Senators, I helped establish the Joint Task Force on Childhood Obesity. Thanks to the work of that group, and the Children's Advertising Review Unit at the Council of Better Business Bureaus, we have seen 13 major food companies pledge to limit ads for unhealthy foods to children, and numerous media companies pledge to use licensed characters only to advertise healthy foods. Disney, Discovery Kids, and The Cartoon Network are among those that have pledged to use licensed characters only to promote healthy foods and active lifestyles. Likewise, Ion Media, producer of the popular show Veggie Tales, has pledged to run NO ads for unhealthy foods. The CBBB's recent report shows that the 13 companies that pledged to take action to curb unhealthy food ads have, in fact, fulfilled their pledges. Given that food and beverage companies represent more than 2/3 of the total advertising dollars directed at children, we should begin to see a real change in the types of advertisements that are targeting our children.

As many of you know, I try and follow the advice of my fellow Tennessean, Alex Haley who said "Find the good and praise it." Other industry initiatives are taking place as well. For example, Disney has started a "healthy kid's initiative" at its theme parks and restaurants. Programmers,

such as Nickelodeon have decided to “go dark” for three hours on their Worldwide Day of Play to encourage kids to go outside and exercise. I had the opportunity to join the Discovery Channel’s national science competition to get kids directly involved in the science of food as well as the launch of their free eight-week comprehensive fitness challenge—for the entire family-- that provides tools and motivation to live a healthier lifestyle.

I encourage you—as broadcasters—to join in this national campaign. Whether agreeing to only target kids with healthy food advertisements, or to offer more programming that promotes healthy, active lifestyles-- or even to launch a series with experts to provide information for your listeners. Our children are our nation’s most valuable natural resource, and we must treat them as such. Earlier this week I attended an event at the Kaiser Family Foundation where they released the results of two new studies that show – objectively and quantitatively- the kind of impact media has on our attitudes toward health issues. In one study, researchers worked with the producers of the popular primetime show *Grey’s Anatomy* to include information about HIV. They surveyed viewers both before and after the show, and found that after the show there was almost a 25% increase in the level of knowledge about the topic. If there’s one thing this study demonstrates, it’s that your audience is listening. They pay attention to what you tell them. They

absorb it-- for better or worse. And so I hope that you will continue to provide the kind of positive, wholesome, educational and informative programming you have been bringing to American homes for decades. Thank you again for all of the wonderful work you do, the moral compass and principled leadership you provide to policy makers and parents alike; and as always I welcome your input on these and many other important issues. I need and ask for your prayers and thoughts in the days ahead. Thank you.