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# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2102

COMMITTEES:  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE,  
AND TRANSPORTATION  
FINANCE  
FOREIGN RELATIONS  
SMALL BUSINESS

December 13, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street, SW  
Room 8B201  
Washington, DC 20554

*WCP  
Noted  
12/13/10  
19/10*

Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I understand that tomorrow you will be holding a forum in Washington on teenagers and technology. Because our schedule is full in the Senate with end of year business, I cannot make it to the forum, but I wanted to express my support for this effort.

Forums like this one are an excellent example of the "soft power" of regulators and legislators to convene experts, parents, and kids around the multiple challenges that the digital revolution poses, as well as the opportunities they create to grow, learn, and socialize in healthy ways. As a parent whose kids came of age as the texting, social networking, and multiple devices per person evolution was in its earliest stages, I am happy that they were mature enough to manage their exposure to risk and make the most of the tools these technologies afforded them. But for their kids, and kids growing up today, we need to talk, think, and work together to help them --and their families -- balance our time spent looking at screens, seek out healthy and useful content when we are connected, and behave appropriately and safely in the digital environment.

I understand that part of the agenda for the forum was inspired by a series of articles in the New York Times as well as the bipartisan work and advocacy of your fellow Commissioners. Cyberbullying and privacy risks pose real world threats to our kids and talking about "not doing things online that you know are wrong offline" is a good place to start. Kids are smart and will respond if we reach out to them and involve them in the conversation. They may even teach us some things.

The New York Times series that led in part to this discussion went beyond the physical and social risks to kids to the distracting effect and effect on impatience and concentration of constant digital communications. One article, which actually centered on adults, talked about the benefits that come from thinking when disconnected from technology and free from interruption, as well as the value of enjoying the outdoors in the process. With that in mind, and given that I know you will be encouraging brainstorming, I want to suggest for your discussion an idea I heard recently for a "Digital Sabbath". It may be healthy for families to take one day out of the week and simply disconnect digitally and instead read, spend time together, go for a bike ride, or

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just think, free from interruption. We may find that taking a break from these tools may even help us enjoy them more, put them in their proper perspective, and use them more effectively.

Again, I appreciate and support your effort to help parents and kids better manage our changing world.

Sincerely,



John F. Kerry