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Congress of the United States House of Representatives

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August 2, 2011

The Honorable Julius Genachowski,
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20554

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Dear Chairman Genachowski:

I write to you in the hopes that you will consider an administrative solution to a regulatory matter that I see as having a very detrimental effect on our nation's young people. Specifically, I am concerned about the effect that violent video games can have on the development of America's young people, especially as the use of video games become more prominent in our society. I have long advocated stricter regulation for video games that display violent or sexually inappropriate material, and have introduced and sponsored several pieces of legislation on this topic during my time in Congress.

In the past decade there have been many studies linking increased video game use to obesity, decreased motivation and social skills, and aggressive behavior. All of these studies are incredibly troubling, and I fear that unless more is done to curb the increased dependency on video games, these links will become stronger and more pronounced.

Detrimental Physical Effects

According to a report issued by the American Medical Association released in 1983, there has been a considerable amount of evidence gathered linking epileptic seizure with playing video games. In a population study based in the United Kingdom in 1993, this phenomenon was more prevalent in children between the ages of 7 and 19 than the rest of the population. Moreover, as the time spent playing video games increases among our nation's youth, the obesity rate among our children continues to grow. In fact the rate of childhood obesity has more than tripled in the past 30 years.

Detrimental Behavioral Effects

Recent studies have also found signs of addiction in children and other individuals who spend increased time gaming. Earlier this year, a study from Iowa State University found that 8.5% of American youths ages 8 to 18 who play video games show multiple signs of behavioral addiction. As a result of this addiction, the study found that the children had trouble paying attention in class and performed worse in school. Several studies have also linked the use of violent video games by children to aggressive and violent behavior. There have been several incidents of violence

involving children where the use of violent video games have been cited as at the very least as having some influence.

Industry's Attempts

The video game industry has undertaken attempts to regulate their products, employing the Electronics Software Rating Board (ESRB) rating system which works similar to the MPAA rating system for motion pictures. However, while all games have a rating label on the cover of the game, the game's content often does not reflect its rating, with games that possess child-friendly ratings containing violent or otherwise inappropriate content.

I fear that the loopholes and inaccuracies that exist within the rating system will never be fully addressed simply because the ratings system is overseen by the industry, which stands to make profits by placing as many video games into the hands of children as possible. Our government must do everything they can to hold the industry accountable to ensure parents are aware of the detrimental effects that violent games can have on their children.

This year, I introduced H.R. 400, the Video Game Health Labeling Act of 2010. This bill creates a new rule within the Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) that mandates all video games with an Electronics Software Ratings Board (ESRB) rating of Teen (T) or higher be sold with a simple warning label which reads: ***"WARNING: Excessive exposure to violent video games and other violent media has been linked to aggressive behavior."***

As the FCC examines this initiative, I ask that you consider using the language from this bill and applying the language as an administrative fix to this urgent problem. Only through comprehensive policy can we successfully ensure that parents protect their children to the best of their ability.

Sincerely,



JOE BACA, Congressman
43rd Congressional District