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**Proposed TV ratings
system turn-off to many**

By Dwayne Hastings

**Baptist Press
12/20/96**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--A plan to implement a sex-and-violence ratings system for television -- covering cartoons to soap operas -- was met with skepticism by the head of the Southern Baptist Convention's Christian Life Commission.

"This is not a significant first step; it is not a hopeful first step," said Richard D. Land, president of the SBC agency that deals with ethical and public policy issues, calling the action a "deliberate subterfuge" to the real problem.

The plan, announced Dec. 19 by Jack Valenti of the Motion Picture Association of America, would categorize shows as: TV-Y (for all children), TV-Y7 (inappropriate for children under 7), TV-G (for general audiences not specifically children), TV-PG (parental guidance urged), TV-14 (not for children under 14) and TV-M (adults over 17 only). ABC, NBC, CBS and FOX will implement the plan in January.

"For the entertainment industry to come forward at this point and say they understand and promise to regulate themselves is to believe the proverbial fox has become a vegetarian and can be trusted to guard the chicken coop," Land said.

"This is simply a recognition by the industry that the public is demanding something be done," he continued. "They are attempting to engage in a preemptive strike with a self-regulating system which has proven to be largely meaningless with regard to motion pictures." Valenti also directed the group that crafted the ratings system used currently in the movie industry.

The Center for Media Education, an advocacy group, led the chorus against the industry announcement, calling for a more detailed content-based ratings system of programs' sex and violent scenes in lieu of an age-based system. Such ratings would reveal the degree of sexual or violent content as well as offensive language.

Kathy Montgomery of the Center for Media Education said the proposed ratings plan was more about protecting profits than providing an effective tool for parents. "The industry has turned a deaf ear to parents," she said.

Valenti said any other ratings system would infringe upon the network's First Amendment rights, promising a more thorough system would bring immediate legal action by the entertainment industry, according to a report in the Dec. 13 edition of The New York Times.

"I can tell you right now, we will not use any other television ratings system," Valenti emphasized.

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The Telecommunications Act passed by Congress earlier this year called upon the Federal Communications Commission to oversee development of a ratings system if the industry failed to voluntarily devise such a system by Feb. 1997. Valenti's announcement was designed to thwart government action on a ratings system.

A centerpiece of the legislation was the requirement that television sets built after 1997 be equipped with an electronic component, a V-chip, that will allow parents to regulate what shows can be seen on the television based on ratings codes.

"Parents can make up their own minds about what is appropriate for their children as long as they are given basic information," argued Congressman Edward J. Markey, D-Mass., who favors a more content-based ratings system, in the Times report. "And we should stop pretending that ratings attached by the producers or distributors of shows will have any credibility at all."

"There is certain significant experience and history to cast serious doubt on this industry's ability to exercise and self impose any meaningful restraint," agreed Land.

The Children's Defense Fund, the National PTA, the American Psychological Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics joined in rejecting the Valenti-proposed ratings system. The American Civil Liberties Union dismissed the need for any public rating system, calling the idea "government-sponsored censorship."

A study of network television during the "family hour," conducted by the University of California at Santa Barbara and released recently, revealed 75 percent of the shows during that hour from 8 to 9 p.m. contained some sexual content. A similar study in 1976 revealed 43 percent had such content.

The study found more children watch television during that hour than on Saturday mornings or weekday afternoons.

"There is no question that for the most part TV has generated into an electronic cesspool," Land said, noting the networks' agreement to rate their shows is a weak first step in getting the airwaves cleaned up and may instead provide additional cover for the entertainment industry to broadcast more adult-themed programming than before.

"This is nothing more than a self-serving, counterproductive attempt to blow smoke by the industry," he said.

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**Pastor and nine-member family
lose everything in morning fire**

By Karen L. Willoughby

**Baptist Press
12/20/96**

GUNNISON, Colo. (BP)--The pajama-clad pastor's family stood barefoot in 18 inches of snow and watched orange-red tongues of flame consume everything they owned.

Their emotions were as numb as their toes, pastor's wife Jan Craig said.

"How do you comprehend the loss of simply everything? Our 4-year-old didn't even have pants on," she said. "We counted heads about a dozen times."

The Steve and Jan Craig family includes seven children between the ages of 19 and seven months.

"The best part was having all my children safe and sound," the pastor's wife said. "And just to see within a matter of 15 minutes people were bringing by checks and food and clothes. One woman came out of the shower, hair soaking wet and it was 28 degrees below zero -- the coldest day of the year, so far."

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The worst part was the loss of their rented log home, Jan Craig said. The nine-member family crowded into a church-member's home for three days before the American Red Cross put them up for the next three days in a local motel. From there they would move until the new year into the home of a family vacationing during the holidays.

"It really hit yesterday when we drove out to the post office box at the entrance to our subdivision to get our mail," she said. "I just lost it. 'We can't go any further,' I said. 'We can't go around the corner because we don't have a home to go to.'

"It's like a hole in your heart," the pastor's wife said.

Finding a permanent place to live is going to be a challenge, Steve Craig said. Gunnison, on Colorado's Western Slope, is 30 miles from Crested Butte ski slopes so home prices are steep and housing is in limited supply.

"Even with the baby sleeping in our room, we need four bedrooms," the pastor said. "That's not easy to come by here. The Board of Realtors has sent out an emergency message to all the real estate agents in the valley, asking them to contact summer residents as a temporary solution.

"Another big need is vehicles," Steve Craig said. "We had three of them, all paid for so we just had liability insurance on them. The fire started in the garage and they are all gone. We're just praying for someone to donate a 4-wheel drive or a minivan."

Heat from the fire exceeded 2,700 degrees in the garage, fire officials said. It twisted bicycle frames past the point of repair, melted skis standing in a downstairs bedroom, popped glass in picture frames.

But even as Steve Craig mourned the loss of the Bible he'd been studying before he'd gone to bed, the rolltop desk that first had been his great-grandfather's and the memorabilia of his Air Force days and 21 years of marriage and ministry, he praised God for physical safety.

"Jason -- he's a freshman at Western State College here -- got home about 6:45 from taking a friend to the airport," the pastor said. "That woke us up, and then the baby got fussy, which is not like him; it kept us from dozing off. We think now the smoke was getting to him, and he didn't like it. Then I started hearing some funny sounds, like thuds, that I decided must be snow falling off the roof. Then there was a strange smell. And then the smoke alarm went off in the downstairs hallway.

"We jumped up, grabbed the baby, waked up the girls and then the boys, got everybody out on the porch," Steve Craig said. "Josh wasn't there. Jason went back in after him. We thought he was sleeping on the couch, but when Jason felt for him -- the smoke was so thick he couldn't see -- he wasn't. So he checked his bed and there he was. Flames followed them as they dashed out the door.

"It was close," the pastor said. "It was very, very close. I didn't realize until later just how close it was. A fireman said five minutes more and we wouldn't have gotten out."

Apparently the fire started when fuel leaked onto the hot manifold of the 1979 Buick Skylark Jason had used for the airport run, or perhaps onto cardboard protecting the cement floor.

"God absolutely protected us," Steve Craig said. "God saved us from being destroyed and God is going to use this for his glory, to further his kingdom work here. It's the talk of the town."

Within an hour of the fire a neighbor's garage looked like a goodwill center from all the clothing that already had been donated, the pastor said. By noon church members and friends had organized a relief effort: one would be responsible for housing, another for food, another would locate a loaner vehicle. Within 24 hours banks had opened trust accounts -- Gunnison Bank and Trust Co. (PO Box 119, Gunnison CO 81230) set up account #1041858 -- stores were displaying coffee cans for donations and the Craigs were overwhelmed at the kindnesses shown by formerly reticent townspeople.

An elementary school principal sent a note home with students asking for clothing donations. Within three days, clothing to fill three trucks, plus a Christmas tree, were delivered to the Craig family. What they don't need will be given to others in Gunnison and in Denver, Steve Craig said.

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"It's been incredible how you don't think your ministry has done anything, and then something like this happens and you have all these people coming up to you and telling you how much they appreciated what you do," Jan Craig said. "It's been especially neat to see all these churches and all these pastors coming together. One woman came up to me and said, 'I'm not Baptist, but that doesn't matter,' and gave me a check for \$100.

"A Catholic priest came over Sunday morning and handed Steve \$1,000. He said at mass the night before, a woman visiting from California gave it to him and said, 'I want you to give this to someone who needs it.'"

Steve Craig, who moved to Gunnison in 1993 to be bivocational pastor at Faith Southern Baptist Church, earns a living as a mental health counselor. The church averages about 50 in Sunday morning worship. Its ministries include a clothing closet, food closet and gift baskets for every new baby born in Gunnison -- about 125 a year.

The congregation, which meets in rented facilities, is one of two SBC churches in Gunnison.

"People keep asking how they can help," said Steve Fuller, a friend who is coordinating the community response. "This is a family of nine people who lost everything, everything. They're homeless, car-less and furniture-less. If you were in a situation like that, what would you need?"

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Pro-lifers dispute Clinton's claims on partial-birth abortion

By Tom Strode

**Baptist Press
12/20/96**

WASHINGTON (BP)--President Clinton again has declared he would sign an amended ban on partial-birth abortions, but pro-life leaders continue to say he is misrepresenting the facts and his version would stop almost no such procedures.

When asked about the ban in a recent news conference, the president, who vetoed the ban in April, said he initially thought he "would sign it since I am generally opposed to third-trimester abortions." He "wanted to sign" the bill but would not in order to protect the "few hundred women" a year who need the procedure to protect their health and ability to have other children, Clinton said.

"Now, I pleaded and I pleaded and I pleaded last time with the Congress to adopt highly restrictive language on this procedure, which would make it clear that there had to be a very serious health problem for the woman involved ... and they would not do it. And they would not do it, I believe, because it was great politics. But it's bad policy," the president said Dec. 13. "But if they will help me with language here and do it in good faith, I will happily sign this bill."

The problem, pro-lifers say, is Clinton's assertions do not match the facts:

-- The vast majority of partial-birth abortions, which involve the almost total delivery of a child before a catheter is used to suction out the brain, are done in the fifth and sixth months, rather than the third trimester.

-- The procedure actually endangers the mother's reproductive health rather than protecting it.

"President Clinton's proposal would ban few, if any, partial-birth abortions," said Douglas Johnson, the National Right to Life Committee's legislative director, in a written statement.

"President Clinton's proposal would apply only to the 'third trimester' -- that is, the seventh month and later -- and thus would allow the continuation of thousands of partial-birth abortions, on healthy babies of healthy mothers, during the fifth and sixth months of pregnancy."

When asked on the Dec. 15 telecast of NBC's "Meet the Press" if the president would extend the ban to the second trimester, White House Chief of Staff Leon Panetta said Clinton would not.

"He would want a woman to have the right to choose," Panetta said, according to a report by columnist Robert Novak in The Washington Post.

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In the procedure in question, an intact baby is turned with the use of forceps and delivered feet first until only the head is left in the birth canal. The doctor pierces the base of the baby's skull with surgical scissors, then inserts a catheter into the opening and suctions out the brain. The collapse of the skull enables easier removal of the dead child.

Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop said in a filmed interview released this fall, "I know of no disease, no congenital anomaly where this type of procedure would be necessary in order to preserve the mother's health or to save her life. And this certainly doesn't do anything for the life of the baby."

In the interview, which is part of a video entitled "The Procedure" and produced by Mission City Television Inc., Koop said just turning the baby around by this method "is a very serious threat to the future of that mother's uterus. And so rather than preserving that woman's fertility, I think very likely they would produce an incompetent cervix, which would very seriously threaten her future fertility."

The president also said the procedure is necessary for children with "terrible deformities" and their mothers will not have the ability to give birth in the future unless "the enormous size of the baby's head is reduced before being extracted from their bodies."

NRLC's Johnson said "the overwhelming majority of medical specialists deal with hydrocephaly (head enlargement) by draining the excess fluid and then delivering the baby alive, without risk to the mother."

Koop said, "Well, you know, sometimes they say you can't deliver a baby because something about it is too big. I had a child delivered in 1946 presented to me with a huge mass on her abdomen that was much larger than her head and contained all her abdominal organs. Not only was she delivered safely without hurting the mother or the baby, but I repaired that defect, put all of her abdominal organs back where they belonged and many years later she became the head nurse in my intensive care unit at Philadelphia Children's Hospital."

Bill supporters also have said Clinton's health exception would gut the ban, because the Supreme Court, when it legalized abortion in 1973, defined health for abortion purposes to include "all factors -- physical, emotional, psychological, familial and the woman's age -- relevant to the well-being of the patient."

Abortion advocates have contended only about 500 partial-birth abortions are done each year in this country. In a Sept. 15 article in The Record, a New Jersey daily paper, however, it was reported a clinic in Englewood, N.J., performs at least 1,500 partial-birth abortions a year. Only a "minuscule amount" are done for medical reasons and most are elective, doctors at the clinic said.

The chief sponsor of the ban, Rep. Charles Canady, R.-Fla., has said he will reintroduce the measure at the beginning of the next Congress.

Congress attempted to override Clinton's veto in the early fall. The House of Representatives achieved the necessary two-thirds majority, 285-137, but the Senate's 57-41 vote fell short.

Clinton's veto spurred opposition from some physicians and some religious leaders.

More than 300 physicians, primarily obstetricians, united to oppose the procedure and declare it is never medically necessary.

Evangelist Billy Graham, who has refrained from criticizing Clinton, told the president he was wrong. Then-Southern Baptist Convention President Jim Henry and 10 former presidents called for Clinton, a Southern Baptist, to repent of his action. SBC messengers adopted a resolution condemning the veto and calling for an override. The Southern Baptist Christian Life Commission supported passage of the bill and the override of the veto.

The country's Roman Catholic cardinals and the head of the church's bishops said they would work for an override. Vatican spokesman Joaquin Navarro-Valls called Clinton's action a "shameful veto."

After Clinton's veto, a group of mainline Protestant and Jewish leaders -- including officials of the United Methodist Church, Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church (USA) and United Church of Christ -- expressed their support for his action in a letter.

Odds improving in fight against gaming industry

By Lee Weeks

WASHINGTON (BP)--Bernie Horn is not a betting man. As political director of the National Coalition Against Legalized Gambling, he says wagering is more than a game.

Since November's election, however, Horn admits the odds are improving for the Washington-based lobbying group's fight against the gaming industry.

Over the last two years, efforts to legalize gambling have failed in nearly two dozen states through actions taken by legislatures and voter disapproval expressed through defeated referendums.

In November, bids to legalize gambling were turned back in Arkansas, Nebraska, Colorado, Ohio, Washington state, Iowa, Virginia and Guam as well as 33 parishes (counties) in Louisiana.

Anti-gambling groups were not as successful in states and cities such as Alabama, New Orleans, Michigan and West Virginia.

Still, Horn is not complaining. "I doubt that there is any interest group in America that can claim a better record," he said.

"In Ohio we were outspent 15 to 1 and there we had the governor on our side raising money," Horn said. "In Arkansas we were probably out-fundraised 20 to 1, but in both those states we clobbered them."

Horn said one of the advantages anti-gambling groups have is they don't have to match spending with the gaming industry's multi-million dollar ad campaigns.

Larry Page, director of the Christian Civic Action Committee in Little Rock, Ark., was the point man for conservative anti-gambling coordinators working in virtually every Arkansas county.

Page equipped pastors with anti-gambling literature which in turn was reproduced and disseminated among congregants. He led a state-wide drive for new voters which netted a "substantial increase" according to state polling officials.

"I had some doubts about keeping our lead," Page told the New York Times. "They were running their ads unopposed. It was saturation advertising."

Horn said efforts like those of Page are essential to turning back legalized gambling pursuits.

"If we can just get our message to the voter it doesn't matter how much the other side spends," he said. "If we fail to get our message out, then they kill us."

Horn said the most disappointing advance by the gambling industry occurred in Detroit, where voters approved the legalization of three casinos by a 52 percent to 48 percent margin.

"We could have won that," Horn mused. "We came awfully close and didn't. We were outspent 100 to 1. A little bit more effort from our side and we would have won."

But Arkansas and Ohio were different stories.

"Our side spent maybe \$400,000 or \$500,000 in Arkansas and about the same in Ohio and that was sufficient against \$8 million to \$10 million in each state. We get a lot of bang for the buck and unfortunately it ain't over."

Horn said that despite the good showing by gambling opponents over the last two years, gambling proponents are not through waging their battle.

"We're going to have this battle over and over again for the next few years until there is a clear trend. In the last two elections ... we've really turned the tide but Las Vegas is not ready to give up and they'll look for other situations like Detroit where with enough money they can pull it off. If they spend \$10 million, it's a small investment compared to the profits they would get in just one month."

**BSSB honors four Southern Baptists
for Bible teaching-reaching work** **By Chip Alford**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP)--The Baptist Sunday School Board recently honored four Southern Baptists for creative contribution to Bible teaching-reaching ministry.

The inaugural Washburn-Piland-Taylor Directors' Awards were presented during the annual planning meetings for state Sunday school directors and associates held in mid-December at the BSSB in Nashville. The awards are named in honor of the three most recent directors of Bible teaching-reaching work at the BSSB: A.V. Washburn, Harry Piland and current director, Bill Taylor. All three men were on hand for the awards presentation.

Awards were given to honor excellent Bible teaching-reaching work in four categories -- church, association, state convention and Southern Baptist Convention. Winners included:

-- Church: Charles Orr, minister of education/business administrator at First Baptist Church, Paris, Tenn. Orr has served at First Baptist, Paris for 45 years. A new fellowship hall on the church campus was recently named in his honor. Taylor said of Orr: "For anyone to serve that long at the same church and have the kind of success that Charles Orr has had is amazing. He is a good example of what commitment to Bible teaching and reaching is all about."

-- Association: Larry Fillingim, director of church leadership development for the Tarrant County Baptist Association in Fort Worth, Texas. Taylor said Fillingim "is leading out in some of the most creative and innovative work in Bible teaching-reaching ministry in the country. He is creating new models of cooperation between local churches and associations."

-- State: Bernie Spooner, director of the Sunday school/discipleship division at the Baptist General Convention of Texas in Dallas. Taylor said Spooner was deserving of the honor "because of his long history of excellent work in Bible teaching and reaching. He also led a group of state directors and other religious educators in a survey on the needs of local churches into the 21st century. The recommendations were presented to all Southern Baptist agencies as valuable input for decision making."

-- SBC: Louis Hanks, director of the Biblical studies department in the Sunday School Board's Bible teaching-reaching division. Taylor said Hanks "has been a driving force behind the literature improvements in all three of the Sunday school curriculum lines published by the Sunday School Board and the newly designed Vacation Bible School materials. Any Southern Baptist who uses our materials will benefit from Dr. Hanks' leadership."

Taylor said he plans to make the Directors' Awards an annual presentation.

"When people are doing great work, it needs to be acknowledged. These men are great examples for others to follow. We want to recognize and encourage them and, hopefully, inspire others."

Two other BSSB employees were honored during the awards banquet.

Rick Edwards, manager of the adult biblical studies section in the Bible teaching-reaching division, received the inaugural Hight C. Moore Award for outstanding contribution to biblical studies. The award is named in honor of Moore, who served as supervisor of the BSSB's editorial department from 1907-1943.

David Apple, adult lead consultant in the Bible teaching-reaching division's ministry and leadership development department, was honored with the first-ever Elsie Rives Award for outstanding field service. The award is named in honor of Rives, who was manager of the children's program section from 1963-1987.

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