

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4036

As Reported By House Committee On:

Energy & Utilities

Brief Description: Memorializing Congress to adopt legislation providing for rating and blocking objectionable content on television.

Sponsors: Representatives Patterson, Reams, Stevens, Brown, McMahan, Elliot, Backlund, Robertson, D. Schmidt, Mulliken and Johnson.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

Energy & Utilities: 1/24/96, 1/30/96 [DP].

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY & UTILITIES

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 8 members: Representatives Casada, Chairman; Crouse, Vice Chairman; Hankins, Vice Chairman; Patterson, Ranking Minority Member; Chandler; Kessler; Mastin and Mitchell.

Staff: Dan Okada (786-7291).

Background: No federal rules or regulations currently require television programs to carry a rating which would identify violent or objectionable material contained in the program. Further, no system is in place by which to give a television show a rating.

There are also no federal laws that require television sets to be equipped with devices viewers can use to block out programming at certain time slots or to block out shows with a common rating.

Pending federal legislation currently in conference committee may address some of these issues. Early conference drafts indicate the final bill will authorize the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to set up an advisory committee to recommend a system of rating television programming if the industry does not develop an acceptable voluntary rating system within one year. Further, the FCC would be authorized to promulgate rules that specify how show ratings will be transmitted to television receivers for blocking. Finally, if adopted, the new law would require all television sets with screens 13 inches or larger to be equipped with a feature enabling viewers to block display of all programs with a common rating.

Summary of Bill: The United States Congress is asked to adopt legislation that (1) provides a rating code for violence and other objectionable material on television; and (2) requires televisions be equipped with circuitry designed to enable viewers to block the display of channels during particular time slots and to block display of all programs with a common rating.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Testimony For: Parents have a difficult time monitoring what their children are watching on television. Parents are often offended by some of the shows children can watch on television. A rating system for television programs, as well as devices to block out certain time slots or shows with a common rating, would assist parents in monitoring the shows watched by their children.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Patterson, prime sponsor.