

12-21-99 Oyster Bay
Boys' and Girls' Club

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Oyster Bay, New York

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It is good to be here during this holiday season at the Boys' and Girls' Club - which is one of my favorite places anywhere, and especially this new one - it is so great. I want to congratulate everybody who worked on it and created this fabulous facility.

As you can see we've got a wonderful group of people to talk about some important issues. I don't think it is any surprise for any parent or teacher or any citizen really in New York or in our country today. We're going to be focusing on the topic of youth violence and some of the specific things we think we can do about youth violence. It has been all too much in the news and there are so many tragic incidents that each of us can point to those that make the headlines and those we know about in our own lives.

So I am hoping that we will have a real good conversation and perhaps come up with some ideas about what we could do together to deal with youth violence. I know that many of you in this room are leaders both of young people and in the larger community here in Oyster Bay and Nassau County. We are really hoping to have everyone participate as much as possible. I want to thank everyone who is on the panel.

Now I will introduce them to you in just a minute. I am delighted that Tom DiNapoli is also here. Tom you know has been a leader on the issue of media violence in the State Assembly.

I want to focus on one thing that I find especially frustrating about media violence. I brought with me a chart of the different ways that people in the industries rank violence - so that a parent who is a conscientious parent looking for information about what to do is totally confused.

You've got TV violence. You've got movie violence. You've got video violence. And if you were to try to understand what you should do as a mom or dad and you were going to try and tell your children what they couldn't see and you were going to try to supervise, here is what you'd be up against: for movies

you've got everything from G, PG, PG-13, R, and NC-17. We are already into the third alphabet soup.

Then you've got premium cable television which for reasons that I don't understand had to adopt a wholly different rating system: MV, V, GV, RP, AL, GL, PLN, AC, SC all of which mean different things than we meant for the movie rating system. Then you've got the TV rating system: TVY, TVY7, TVY7FE that means tends to combat or fantasy violence, TVG and on and on.

Then you've got video games with a wholly different rating system. You've got EC for early childhood then you've got E for everyone, TMAO for adults only. You've got video games that are Level 4, Level 3, Level 2, Level 1 and Level 0. Then you've got music which is parental advisory and then you've got online which is totally confusing. So when you add all of that up it is no wonder that parents feel that they can hardly begin to try to exercise parental authority and discretion over what their children are exposed to.

I want to begin the conversation today by making a simple recommendation and really a challenge, I guess you could say that it is-I think we can do a lot better. I would like to challenge all of the industries to create one simple rating system for all movies, all cable shows, all broadcast TV shows, all records, and all videos; games.

In whatever medium it appears violence is violence and we need a much clearer understanding of what it is that our children are being exposed to and the rating should be the same. Parents need clear guidance not alphabet soup like I just recited to you.

I would certainly work to make that a reality in the Senate and in any other way that I could to make industry representatives come together to try to come up with a single clear simple rating system. We've now got the V-chip on new TV sets. We are beginning to assert some control over content. But we have made it much too confusing and impossible for most parents and adults to figure out what to do.

I want to turn now to someone who has gotten ahead of the curve on this issue. Tom has introduced a bill in the New York Assembly that will begin the process of bringing some common sense control over video games. Tom and I were

talking about this earlier - he actually went to an arcade.

How many of the adults in this room have ever been to one of those video arcades and actually seen the games? Well it is a very revealing and sobering experience and you couldn't help but to be, well I couldn't help but to be, upset when I read about the two boys from Columbine being obsessed with the game Doom and there are so many others - Mortal Combat - all of the rest of them that are out there.

Tom has a very specific legislative proposal that he has made in the Assembly and I'd like him to talk about that and some of his concerns about video violence.