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NCJW

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Albany, New York

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Good afternoon. I'm delighted to be here at the warm-up chat for (inaudible). And sorry that I'm not going to be able to stay and listen to (inaudible), if they join, and I know you we'll find that to be the case. I am going to be leaving here to go meet my friend, Hadassah Lieberman, and we're scheduled to be together, but otherwise I would stay, really, honestly I would. I want to thank Joan and (inaudible) and Judy and (inaudible) who is the program chair, and all of you for your invitation.

I'm delighted that I was invited originally to come, and pleased that I could be here, because some of you may know that I had the pleasure of working with NCJW for years, and I've (inaudible) within the last year I've been able to stand with NCJW numbers (inaudible) in Albany, as we stood firmly for the State Senate to pass hate crimes legislation which finally after many years they did, and I applaud (inaudible). And then a few weeks ago I was once again with NCJW representatives as we stood on the steps of City Hall urging the Congress to finally, once and for all, pass (inaudible) hate crimes legislation which is now pending in the House, having been passed in the Senate, and I thank you for the advocacy that NCJW has done, both nationally and through the New York chapters, and I'm just hopeful that the Congress will see its way clear to pass this important legislation and send it to the President for signature. And then last April I was at (inaudible) Center with NCJW representatives including the national president to talk about domestic violence.

So it's a pleasure to be here, but my relationship goes back more than fifteen years when I happened to find myself in Miami and I opened a newspaper in my hotel room and saw a picture of a woman working with a mother and a child, teaching the mother how to teach her own child, and I read about this program called HIPPI, and of course I thought the only HIPPI that was around, were, you know, those of us back in the '60s (inaudible) choose not to look at old pictures and albums and remember those clothes we wore. But I learned about the whole instruction program for pre-school youngsters and that they had been sponsored by NCJW and had been developed in Israel and was being brought to

mothers in Miami. So I immediately got on the phone, I called the New York headquarters of NCJW, I asked about this program. I was put in touch with the program's founder, Dr. (inaudible) who NCJW has funded for so many years. I tracked her down on the phone, and I never will forget the conversation (inaudible) is now a great friend of mine, I said I was calling from Arkansas, and she said "Where?" And I said, "Well, if you have a map of the United States, it's near Texas." "Oh, Texas! I know about Texas." And I said I was just intrigued by the idea that we would put the attention on mothers to try to raise the educational levels and awareness of mothers to be able to work with their children, and could she tell me something about that. And she was kind enough to actually (inaudible) to Little Rock, the next time she was in New York. We started with a few people, and with help from NCJW and many good friends, that program is still thriving. And I was proud to serve on the National Board of HIPPIY and help to hire the first executive director, (inaudible) Westheimer, who did a wonderful job in spreading the program and whom I wrote about it in my book. And a few years ago (inaudible) - who some of you may know was the former national president of NCJW, who now, by the way, is running for office in Florida, and from everything I hear, doing an excellent job - she and I went to Israel and visited (inaudible) in Israel, and to talk with Dr. (inaudible) about the way this program had brought people together at the grassroots level in both of our countries, and what an incredible impact it made in the lives of so many children and mothers.

That was the fourth of five memorable trips that I have made to Israel, and I have always felt privileged and honored to, not only work with NCJW and my friends at (inaudible) University, but to work very hard to underscore the importance of a safe and secure peace in the Middle East. And yesterday I was honored to stand with my friend Elie Wiesel, as he gave me his support for the Senate, and talk together with him about what remains ahead in our work for peace.

My interests have always been, for more than thirty years, on children and children's lives, and it was especially troubling for me to see the latest textbooks that the Palestinian authority had issued, which were still teaching lessons of hate to the children of the West Bank and Gaza. And I called on Chairman Arafat who also (inaudible) Minister of Education, immediately to remove all anti-Semitic language from all

Palestinian textbooks. And to comply with the basic provisions of the Oslo agreement and (inaudible) Accords, or else face the end of future assistance from the United States.

I think it's imperative that we strongly support the Israeli government and the Israeli people as they work to create a framework for peace that will guarantee Israel's long-term stability and security. And here's what we must insist, that the Palestinian authority not only negotiates at the bargaining table, but begins to change the hearts and minds of people, starting with children, and abide by their commitments to avoid violence and unilateral actions of any kind, or else face the cut-off of U.S. assistance, since we know that peace must be reached by both sides of the negotiating table.

As I was thinking about children yesterday, and then earlier this morning, I stopped at the Hebrew Academy at (inaudible) and Rockaway, and met with the eighth graders who are in the middle of their student council elections, I asked them if they had any questions. And the first question was from a beautiful young girl, who asked me about violence in the media. And I was very struck and impressed by that. And the next question, I called on a young boy, and he wanted to tell me that there had been a movie that was PG but had a lot of violence about dinosaurs, and another young girl asked about a similar issue. But this is something that I feel strongly about and that I would ask for your help and assistance in addressing.

For over thirty years, I've worked, ever since I was a young law student, to protect children, particularly vulnerable children, and to strengthen families. And as a lawyer, as an educational reformer, or health care advocate, even the (inaudible) work I've done at the Children's Defense Fund or Children's Television Workshop, and most importantly as a mother, I think we all have to do everything possible to create the circumstances in which every child can live up to his or her God-given potential. Now that is certainly work that I would like to continue in the Senate, but I see how difficult it is for families to feel like they have a (inaudible) over their own shoulder. I noticed that a few weeks ago when we were talking about the FTC report which found that despite what we had thought, entertainment companies were targeting advertising and marketing of violent entertainment to young children. And retailers were selling the CD's, the videos, and the video games to children, despite the warning labels. And

movie theaters were letting children in to see movies that were rated "R" even if they were not accompanied by an adult and shouldn't have been let in. I think that is a critically important issue that we have to address, and I applaud what Al Gore and Joe Lieberman have said about what the industry must do, and how important it is for adults to stand together on this issue. I know when Chelsea was a child, certainly, Bill and I tried to protect her from television and movies that we didn't think were appropriate, and in my book I wrote a whole chapter about the research that links violent programming to violent tendencies in our children. And I called for (inaudible) that would help parents defend themselves and their children from the influence of that kind of violent entertainment. And I'm pleased that we now have a V-chip, but of course, the V-chip won't do any good unless parents program their TV's to keep that kind of programming away from their children.

But the more that I thought about this, the more it seems to me that it isn't just violent programming that influences our children, it is the constant barrage of materialistic marketing and advertising that is targeted at children that I'm very concerned about. You know, for years we've fought to stop the marketing of tobacco to our children, and finally Joe Camel, thank goodness, is history. But now, when we see the violent games, the violent films, the violent TV shows being marketed, and as one young child at the Hebrew Academy said to me, it even happens at four o'clock, when you'd think that - she talked about younger children - I love it when your 13-year old child says that younger children can see these programs - but the fact is that we have to ask ourselves why are our children being specifically targeted as a group of consumers, both for inappropriate programming and to buy products that are often linked to such programming. And is it fair to advertise directly to children at all? Is it fair to advertise in the schools to children? Now companies are spending nearly \$7 billion a year marketing to children under twelve. They target young children's vulnerabilities, they hire psychologists and anthropologists. One advertiser put it this way, advertising at its best is making people feel that without their product, you are a loser, and kids are very sensitive to that.

I really believe that since NCJW for years has stood strongly to protect children and strengthen families, that this is an issue that all of us in society as parents, and business leaders, and teachers, and members of important civic groups

have to pay more attention to. We know that the whole range of companies understand that children are an irresistible market. It's a generation of seventy-nine million potential consumers, the strongest and biggest in American history. And nearly half of our families with children ages 2-17 have televisions, VCR's, video game equipment and computers. And nearly 6 out of 10 children over the age of eight have their own TV in their own bedroom. Of course, in the dark ages when I was growing up we had one television and everybody had to fight over what channel we watched. So, your parents would know all the time what it is you had on the TV. Now, very often in my family and others we don't know what is on in the TV.

And, we also can't be just worried about what happens in our homes because advertisements are finding their way into schools as well - sometimes under the guise of educational materials. They are looking to buy advertisements that are posted in the school. They set quotas for students to sell things and get products that they are hawking. And when our children get home, all too often, it is just a continuation of that kind of marketing.

And I was stunned to learn that on the Internet that when people surf that the information being gathered about the habits of these surfers is being used first and foremost to target children because lots of times children don't follow the directions about how not to use my name or not to be able to respond to me. And parents are starting to tell me that their children are being flooded with inappropriate material both on the Internet and in the mail.

I think that part of what we have to do is recognize that children between the ages of 2 and 11 clicked on the Internet banner ads more than any other age group. I was stunned to learn that. And I think it is because a lot of them don't really understand what they are doing and they just click on everything and the ads come up and the information is there for them. And we also know that children now (inaudible) 24 months they are asking for products in brand names. This is not by happenstance. This is what is designed to happen - to entice our children to become consumers before they become citizens. And I don't know any of us who have escaped the desire by kids to nag us about a product that they have seen that they want to buy. In fact, marketers have a name for this called, "nag and (inaudible)" (laughter). I certainly can relate

to that. And too many companies simply see our children as little cash cows that they can exploit.

About 22 years ago the FTC decided that this was a problem and said that they needed to do something about it.

Unfortunately, the Congress removed the authority for the FTC to do that. I believe that we should revisit this issue. First: No advertising should be targeted to pre-schoolers. I think we can all agree that ads should not be marketed to children before the children even attend school and start their formal education. So I would call on the industry (inaudible) to cease doing this to the youngest of our children. I also would call for legislation to have the FTC report brought up to date from 22 years ago to report to us on the extent of advertising - just as they did on the programming of violent material and what the effect that has had on marketing to children. Let's look at all of advertising to children and give the FTC full authority to limit such advertising so we can keep our children away from manipulative messages.

I also believe the FTC should be able to set limits on advertising that is harmful to older children once they get into school. Right now they can go after egregious cases like Joe Camel but not cases that have other harmful effects.

And, third, I think we should make our elementary schools off-limits to advertisers beyond the routine vending machines that are often in our schools. As one school official put it, "The three R's should not include retailing to children in the school building."

So, I think that, as I heard earlier this morning from the children themselves - you know, children (inaudible) - they look for guidance, they look for (inaudible) adult authority to set the structures for their lives. It is very hard for most families to be able to convey their values when the messages coming into their homes hour after hour contradict or undermine those values. So, I would hope that this might be an issue that the NCJW and other like-minded groups (inaudible) families and children would take a look at. And I thank you for the work that you have done over the years especially for (inaudible) but also on hate-crimes legislation, domestic violence and so many other pressing matters. You have fought for the rights and dignity of women not only here at home but around the world. You have never forgotten that families are the child's first school and that we have to

continue to honor our seniors and any among us who is left behind.

I know that at the core of the service you perform are those Jewish values and principles that have stood the test of so many generations and that are about once again to be honored as the New Year comes into being. These are values that (inaudible) all of us - to be responsible for each other, to love the stranger, to respect one another and never turn away from suffering and injustice. These are not just values for NCJW or values for the Jewish community. These are values for all people of good faith and I thank you for your leadership.  
(applause)