

bill and the V-chip and, perhaps most important of all, this entirely voluntary gathering of your industry embodies what I see as the three great challenges this country faces as we go through this period of remarkable transformation. The telecom bill plainly will create more opportunities in this new era. The V-chip and your endeavors will enable us to exercise more responsibility to promote the strength and values of family. And if we do these things in a completely voluntary and open way, it will help us to come together as a national community.

There are so many forces in America today that are operating to divide the American people, and I think we should work on uniting ourselves. It's been my experience and observation that when this country is united, we are never defeated; we always achieve what we set out to do. And you have gone a long way toward helping build that kind of community by your very presence here today, and I thank you for that.

We are here to discuss how we can best fulfill our common responsibilities in two ways: first, how we can give parents more control over what

their children see on television; and second, how we can improve children's programming.

Two months ago I doubt that many people thought that this meeting, or any meeting like this, could have even occurred. But we have now made so much progress, and we're on the verge of making new progress. I am excited about what I think we can achieve here today for our children, our families, and our future.

And let me say again, for an industry that gets more than its share of criticism, I think it is worth noting that you have all put aside all your vigorous internal, competitive rivalries and dealt with what I think is a very profound set of questions for the future. And so I thank you for being here. I welcome you here, and I must say I'm very much looking forward to our discussion.

And I'd like to ask the Vice President now, who has worked so hard in helping to organize this meeting, to make a few opening remarks, and then we'll get down to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 10:42 a.m. in the State Dining Room at the White House.

Remarks Following a Meeting With Entertainment and Media Executives *February 29, 1996*

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen. I have just concluded a very significant meeting with the leaders of America's media and entertainment industries. I am pleased to report on a breakthrough voluntary agreement to help parents protect their children from violence and adult content on television.

Our purpose in this meeting has been to find out how we can help parents raise their children in the right way and to protect them as they raise them. In this high-technology age, our goal should be more opportunity, more responsibility, and more community, to make changes in the way we do business that will help people to raise their children and bring us together as a people even as we grow the economy and enjoy the opportunities that this new technological era brings.

Just a little over a month ago in my State of the Union Address, I challenged Congress to pass legislation that requires new television

sets to include a V-chip, to give parents the power to screen out violence and objectionable content in television programs. Earlier this month, with the Telecommunications Act, I signed the V-chip into law. Since that time, our administration, spearheaded by the Vice President, has worked with broadcasters, cable firms, production studios, and others to encourage them to find ways to take more responsibilities toward meeting our shared goals. I am gratified that the far-sighted leaders gathered here in this unprecedented meeting have risen to the challenge, and I thank them all.

As a result of our discussions, the media and the entertainment industry has agreed to a voluntary system of ratings for television programs. These ratings will be put in place by the end of this year or the beginning of next year to help parents decide what programs they want their children to watch. And the V-chip will give parents the power to block those programs

they do not want them to watch from their televisions.

We're handing the TV remote control back to America's parents so that they can pass on their values and protect their children. In the next few moments, Jack Valenti will describe the next steps the industry will take. But they've already shown that they recognize their creativity and their freedom carries with it significant responsibility. I applaud them for it, and all Americans are in their debt.

The work we began here is just that, a beginning. In our meeting I invited the industry leaders to come back to the White House to report once they have developed their rating systems, and I look forward to the work they will do.

Let me say on their behalf—I know Jack Valenti will say this—but this is a complicated and difficult undertaking. They talked a lot about some of the challenges that they will face. I think that should cause all the rest of us to be all the more supportive of the fact that they are doing it, doing it together, and doing it with real deliberation and discipline on a specific timetable.

We also had a very good discussion this morning of the urgent need to improve children's programming. It is not enough for parents to be able to tune out what they don't want their children to watch; they want to be able to tune in good programs that their children will watch. We take the Children's Television Act seriously. We want to continue to work with the industry to do the very best we can for our children in both quantity and quality of children's programming. And I believe the executives here today will bring to this challenge the same sense of responsibility they have brought to the issue of TV ratings.

Ultimately, we're trying to raise our children successfully in an age of information overload in which the typical child will watch 25,000 hours of television before his or her 18th birthday. Television is a powerful force to bring people together, to entertain, to educate, to open our minds and hearts. But we also know that young people are exposed regularly to numbing and pervasive violence and other destructive behavior when they park in front of the family television.

I believe what we are doing here today shows how America can meet this challenge and many

of our challenges by businesses and parents and Government all working together, each doing our part. It shows what can happen when visionary business leaders do make a commitment to values and the common good, as well as the bottom line, and when they live up to their responsibilities as corporate citizens of our great country.

I want to say, too, that I hope the kind of responsibility these leaders have shown here today will be matched by other executives in other industries, on other problems the American people face in common. That is how we can move forward into this new age of possibility.

Finally, let me give credit where credit is due. This breakthrough we see today is the result of literally years of concerns by America's parents. Ultimately it is only parents who can prevent our children from seeing programs that teach violence that has no consequences or that inappropriate behavior is glamorous. So to all the parents of America, I say: You will be handed a powerful tool; that you must now exercise it with the responsibilities that go with it. And to all the parents who have worked for this day, I say a very special thank you, especially to Tipper Gore, who has worked on this issue for 20 years, and to the First Lady, who has given it so much of her concern.

America's media and entertainment industry is the world's most vital creative force. It would be much more difficult for me to be President were it not for the economic advantages in international trade brought to us by the creative energies of America's entertainment industry.

I hope that this agreement today will ensure that that creativity will forever be a source of learning and values and responsibilities in the lives of our children, even as it continues to be a great source of your own success, our entertainment, and America's strength.

Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:10 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Jack Valenti, president, Motion Picture Association of America.