

For release: Monday, January 22, 1996
Contact: Jim Kennedy, Senator Lieberman, (202) 224-4041
Kristen Blair, Empower America, (202) 452-8200
Cathy O'Brien, Senator Nunn, (202) 224-0075

Lieberman, Bennett and Nunn Call On Local TV Station Executives to Reject Trashy Daytime Talk Shows

Urge Gannett, Pulitzer, CBS and other major ownership groups to send a message to the worst offenders

WASHINGTON -- Taking the next step in their campaign to clean up daytime talk shows, Bill Bennett and Senators Joe Lieberman and Sam Nunn today called on the owners of local stations to use their influence to take the trash out of talk TV.

"The reality is that the local stations that are buying and airing these shows ultimately decide their fate -- the buck literally starts here," Lieberman, Bennett and Nunn said. "So today we're asking local station owners and managers to use their leverage to force the trash talkers to clean up their act and stop degrading our culture."

The Lieberman-Bennett-Nunn coalition made its plea in the form of an open letter to approximately 16,000 local program buyers gathered this week in Las Vegas for the annual convention of the National Association of Television Program Executives. Much of the syndicated programming for the coming fall season will be bought and sold at the NATPE convention, which officially opens today.

In their letter, Lieberman, Bennett and Nunn noted that although the tide has started to turn against trash talk TV, they were concerned that there were still too many hours of programming on the air that are "degrading, exploitative and deeply offensive to the values shared by most Americans" and that are being regularly watched by millions of children.

Recent examples of trash talk topics include a "Sally Jessy Raphael" show that featured teenage girls whose parents can't stop them from having sex, and a "Richard Bey" show about unfaithful husbands in which one wife showed the audience a bra, panties and a box of condoms as evidence of her spouse's infidelity.

"[W]e urge you to consider your station's responsibility toward the public it serves, and to tell syndicators that you will be taking your dollars elsewhere next season if they refuse to take out the trash," the letter reads. "You have an enormous amount of influence, as several station managers have already demonstrated by pulling the plug on shows they found routinely offensive, and you could quickly change talk TV for the better."

(More)

Trash talk TV
22222

Lieberman, Bennett and Nunn identified several major TV station ownership groups that are each responsible for airing more than 10 hours a day of trash talk programming, and said that those companies could make an immediate impact by rejecting shows that refuse to change the way they do business.

These top ownership groups include several prominent communications and entertainment conglomerates, such as: the Gannett newspaper company, which airs more than 30 hours of trash talk programming on its 15 stations; Pulitzer Publishing, the Hearst Corporation, the Washington Post Company, CBS and NBC.

"Apparently some of these big owners are already in the process of reassessing their association with these programs, and we applaud them for responding to the concerns that millions of viewers have raised," Lieberman, Bennett and Nunn said.

"For those who have not, we simply ask them to take a hard look at the shows they are putting on the air, and to consider whether they are serving their communities by broadcasting programs in which we learn about the sex life of a 17-year-old girl who married her 71-year-old foster father."

NOTE: Included with this release is a copy of the open letter to local station executives, which appears as an advertisement in the NATPE convention program. Also included are the results of a survey of the trash TV talk shows aired by the nation's biggest station ownership companies.



AN OPEN LETTER TO NATPE '96 BUYERS
FROM
BILL BENNETT, JOE LIEBERMAN, AND SAM NUNN

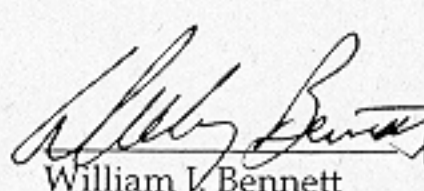
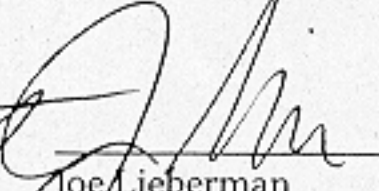
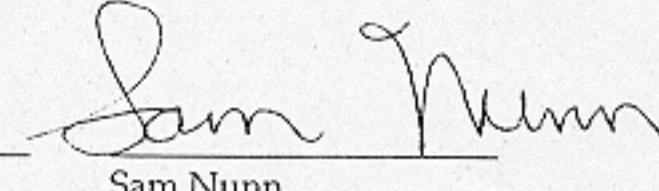
To Local Television Station Executives:

You may be aware of our recent efforts to focus public attention on the disturbing content of certain daytime television talk shows. In recent months, we have written to the major corporations which own these programs to express our concerns, and have called on major advertisers to refuse to sponsor this kind of offensive programming. While the producers have largely ignored the concerns we've raised, several national sponsors -- including Procter & Gamble, Unilever, Sears and Mars, have withdrawn, or are in the process of withdrawing support for the worst offenders. While some of the withdrawals pre-date our campaign, we applaud these efforts and we believe they have already forced some producers to reassess the way they do business. In fact, a few questionable shows have been cancelled outright.

However, the reality is that there are still many hours of programming on the air that are degrading, exploitative, and deeply offensive to the values shared by most Americans, and that are watched daily by millions of young children. So say millions of Americans from all across the country and all walks of life, many of whom have contacted us to voice their outrage at the state of daytime talk TV and show their support for our efforts to take out the trash. These citizens share our strongly-held belief that the messages delivered through these shows are harming our country and our kids, and they are angry that their voices have not been heard. This is what we refer to as the Revolt of the Revolted.

We are writing to ask you to join our effort to clean up the daytime television landscape. Specifically, we urge you to consider your station's responsibility toward the public it serves, and to tell syndicators that you will be taking your dollars elsewhere next season if they refuse to take out the trash. You have an enormous amount of influence, as several station managers have already demonstrated by pulling the plug on shows they found routinely offensive, and you could quickly change talk TV for the better. Thank you.

Sincerely,

		
William J. Bennett Empower America	Joe Lieberman U.S. Senator (CT)	Sam Nunn U.S. Senator (GA)

The Buck Starts Here

Trash TV talk shows and the companies that air them

We recently conducted a survey to find out which of the nation's top TV station ownership groups currently air the most trash TV talk shows** during the day. Of interest, the survey found that 10 companies air more than 10 hours of trash talk programming a day when all of the stations they own are combined. Between them, these companies air a total of 175 hours a day of trash talk. Special note has been made of the hours of programming aired between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m. when many children are watching:

COMPANY NAME	TRASH TV PER DAY
• Gannett Company (15 stations)	31 hours total 14 after school
• Chris-Craft Industries (8 stations)	24 hours total 10 after school
• Pulitzer Publishing (9 stations)	20 hours total 10 after school
• New World Entertainment (12 stations)	20 hours total 8 after school
• Washington Post Company (6 stations)	18 hours total 4 after school
• CBS (15 stations)	16 hours total 7 after school
• The Hearst Corporation (6 stations)	13 hours total 4 after school
• NBC (6 stations)	11 hours total 9 after school
• Viacom/Paramount (12 stations)	11 hours total 4 after school
• Cox Enterprises (6 stations)	11 hours total 0 after school

**Talk shows included in the survey: Jerry Springer, Jenny Jones, Ricki Lake, Sally Jessy Raphael, Geraldo, Rolonda, Richard Bey, Charles Perez, Maury Povich, and Montel Williams.