Remarks of Commissioner Deborah Taylor Tate
At Auburn University
Internet Safety
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Good Afternoon.

I must begin, as I often do, by taking a minute to plug the <u>TOP</u> issue on the

FCC's agenda—the DTV Transition, which is going to occur on February 17, 2009.

If you have an older model TV, or have a family member that does, please prepare

now! You can buy a digital TV, subscribe to cable or satellite, or purchase a

converter box. The government is offering every household two $40 coupons that

can be sued toward the purchase of these boxes—information is available at

<u>www.dtv2009.gov</u>.

I.   FCC Authority

I am delighted to be here on the Plains, speaking about an issue that is at the

top of my personal and professional agenda—Internet Safety. Let me first be clear

that the FCC does not have specific authority to regulate the Internet; however, when

the internet is being utilized for services that are well within our jurisdiction, we may

do so. While I have been a proponent of a "light regulatory touch" for innovative and

cost-cutting services such as VOIP, there are clearly appropriate times when

government has a role to play: USF, e-911, social obligations, and advertising on

internet sites operated by a broadcasting network. More recently, a topic you may be

familiar with and one that is certainly being discussed in Washington a lot: Comcast Internet management practices. Referred to as "net neutrality" or "network management," this is the practice of some internet service providers of controlling the speed at which you can download files—so that one user isn't clogging up the network for everyone else due to the cable system architecture built utilizing nodes to deliver services to an entire neighborhood. We also have authority to regulate cell phone providers, many of whom are now the gateway to the internet. As technologies continue to converge, it is likely that the FCC's authority to regulate any internet services will continue to be a topic for discussion.

II. My Interest

Working for two Tennessee Governors, heading up a healthcare agency and Vanderbilt's public policy institute, most of my professional career has been spent working on issues to improve the lives of children and families. And I have tried to continue to be a voice for parents and children at the FCC, in Washington and across this country. In order to ensure that the next generation—that includes you-- reaches their greatest potential, we must ensure that you have access to a wealth of educational information in an environment that protects your personal information, physical safety and healthy mental development.

Like many parents, I never really thought past the benefits the Internet offers – from my kids doing research for homework to the wonders of telemedicine, to

distance learning opportunities, to creating and producing your own content online. However, we must also realize that this technological explosion of access also presents challenges and very real dangers.

Today's college students grew up with the internet-- 20% began using the internet between the ages of 5 and 8. Seventy-three percent of college students say they use the Internet more than the library. Telephone calls, stock quotes, news headlines, photos from Skybar, video games, and internet--all from the same provider, on the same device. All of these new and exciting services and products for consumers also bring challenges and even risks—risks to our very personal information and data, our privacy, our security, and perhaps most importantly, our children.

III.   The Problem

Everyone here is likely familiar with the Dateline series "To Catch a Predator." I recently watched some of these episodes and even though I am out speaking on this topic, I was shocked to see the number of-- and persistence of-- predators who stalk under-age children online. The statistics range from 1 in 7 to 1 in 25 children that have been solicited online—either way, it is one child too many.

For this generation, the I-Generation, the internet is no longer just an infrequently-accessed research tool, but a ubiquitous aspect of daily life. Consider that while 57% of adults have watched online videos, 93% of college students have.

Whereas 13% of adults have watched online commercials, 60% of college students have. 13% of adults have uploaded videos to the internet; 37% of college students have. 57% of adults have shared video links with others; 83% of college students have. I believe that we all—parents, teachers, industry, government—should do what we can to protect students in the online world—just as we continue to protect them in the offline world.

So, how much time is spent online? What is the risk? How many of you have blogged? A 2007 Pew study shows that 28% of online teens have created their own blog. 27% maintain their own webpage. 39% share their own artwork, photos, stories or videos online. 41% of teens who use MySpace, Facebook, or other social networking sites send messages to their friends everyday through these sites — double their e-mails. Facebook was actually invented by college students.

With the explosion of new educational materials available online, one might think parents would be 100% pleased with the internet's role in their children's lives. But surveys show just the opposite: a late 2006 survey that showed 59% of parents think the internet has been a good thing for their children--- down from 67% who thought it was good in 2004. I was at a conference recently where one researcher said that the number one reason for college drop-outs today is the online game World of Warcraft. A family friend had to leave college due to a gaming compulsion—now

a diagnosable addiction-- online gaming is becoming a very real part of the college experience—and not always a good one.

V.   Caution

I want to urge all students here today to please think carefully about the information you post online. It may seem harmless today, but will it still be harmless five years from now? Ask yourself: is this something I'd want a potential employer to see? Many HR departments are searching Facebook and MySpace profiles of potential new hires. The same is true for college admissions offices—10% of admissions offices check social networking sites, and 38% say that they have seen information that negatively impacted their view of the applicant. I recently met with a man named Michael Fertik, who has started ReputationDefender.com—a service that allows users to find out where their personal information is online-- a snapshot of your "digital footprint."

The other important area where I would urge students to exercise caution is email. What used to be mail and phone scams have now moved to email. If the subject line says "You won!," trust me, you didn't. Internet criminals are going after new technologies to prey on unsuspecting citizens. Don't ever give anyone your identifying information over email.

VI.   Pornography

Another concern the Internet has brought to light is the presence of, and market for, child pornography. Child pornography, most of which is distributed via the Internet, is a multi-billion dollar per year industry. Seventy-nine percent of unwanted exposure to pornography occurs *in the home*. There are more than 4 million pornographic websites or 12% of all websites. The proliferation of child pornography is real and without appropriate government, industry and parental oversight it will likely continue to grow.

VII. Cyberbullying

In addition to these concerns is the problem of cyber-bullying, most recently brought to light in the wake of the tragic death of a young teenage girl who took her own life after being taunted (by a parent!) online. I-safe reports that 42% of children have been bullied online, and 1 in 4 has had it happen more than once. Recently, the Department of Justice held a press conference as part of Internet Safety Month, and outlined the steps parents and children can take to reduce the risk of cyberbullying.

I am desperately interested in this problem, both as a mother of three, including my daughter here at Auburn, and a policymaker who sees this not merely as a technology issue, but as a very real health threat to the safety and well-being of our children.

VIII. Benefits and Risks of Internet

The Internet and broadband have brought the world to our children. With a click of a mouse, they have access to information about almost anything, and in almost any format. Broadband and the internet have improved our access to healthcare, is the driver of all types of commerce and obviously have enhanced communications around the globe. The opportunities are endless. I, like many parents across the country, never really thought past beneficial opportunities the Internet offers. Today, however, I realize that this technology also presents challenges and dangers.

Parenting is a hard job, and it just got harder. Turning off a television, or taking it out of a bedroom, may take some gumption, but overseeing every avenue that a child can walk down on the Internet is daunting. As parents, none of us would allow our children to leave the house without knowing where they're going; yet many parents allow their children to explore the Internet without recognizing the very real dangers that cyberspace poses. Too many of us have been laboring under the myth that the Internet is a "safe place" for our children. Through discussions like the one we are engaging in today---and the many organizations represented here--- we can help parents, teachers and all caregivers be more aware of their children's online activities, and be able to talk to their children about what they access across multiple platforms.

IX. Partners

Last year I participated in the launch of the International Family Online Safety Institute, headed by Stephen Balkham at Kaiser Family Foundation. The Institute is committed to innovative, industry-driven solutions, and bringing together the many pre-existing parental education programs to figure out what works- and what doesn't. Perhaps the most encouraging point about this organization is its supporters: companies like AOL, AT&T, Verizon, Google, Microsoft, and Cisco.

Cox Communications' sponsors an annual National Teen Summit along with National Center for Missing and Exploited Children to allow high school students from across the nation to discuss their experiences on line. National figures such as America's Most Wanted, John Walsh, and Miss America 2007 Lauren Nelson, whose personal online experience caused her to adopt this as her platform, are the facilitators. It is events like this that have the most impact on our children and teens—giving them real-world example of the threats that lurk online—hearing very real stories that have happened to peers, and to learn about the tools and strategies they can use to protect themselves.

As the FCC reviews our own policies and the Internet continues to evolve, I am especially concerned about P2P applications, particularly the growing problems of illegal content distribution, from online child pornography to pirated movies and music, as well as the issue of child online safety and privacy in general. I am encouraged by the efforts of the recently formed P4P working group- where P2P

companies and ISPs are working together to resolve network management issues to foster legal content distribution. I look forward to even more collaborative, industry-based solutions, which are often the most effective and efficient means of resolving complex, technical network disputes. I hope each of you will remember that whenever you download music without paying for it—you are harming our creators, our producers, our musicians and artists and costing our economy billions of dollars. 99cents really isn't very much to pay for a great song!

X.   International

Internet safety isn't just a concern for American families—it's becoming an international issue as well. In just the last few months, I've been asked to speak at APEC-Tel, the Asian Pacific Telecom Ministers in Bangkok; at the Global Forum in Italy; and with Secretary General Hammadoun Tourre of the ITU who has launched a major cyber-security initiative. The Ministry of Japan is now issuing notices urging parents and schools to limit internet-accessible cell phones to children. They have recommended that Japanese cell phone manufacturers include GPS in every phone and talk capabilities only. DOCOMO, the largest Japanese wireless provider, has undertaken an internet-safety curriculum and actually sends instructors into schools to provide instruction. Given the fact that approximately 60% of American teens have a cell phone, and that cell phones are being marketed to children as young as 6, I challenged our U.S. carriers to adopt similar initiatives to provide curriculum and

education regarding safe use of their products—including internet safety, illegal downloading, and especially providing personal information via cell phones.

I believe that each of these initiatives –from domestic to international - is having a positive impact. But there is much more to do; more families to reach, more children to educate and protect.   In recent years, we've seen tightened security at our airports, our schools, and many of our offices. We continue to require E-rate fund recipients required to install filters, screens, and other blocking mechanisms on public school computers. Just like government zoning laws that prevent bars and liquor stores from operating near schools; we need to realize the dangers the internet poses. As our world changes, we must respond appropriately. "Don't talk to strangers" is as applicable today as it was 30 years ago – only more frightening because the 45-year-old convicted pedophile can pretend to be a very cute college guy.

Certainly the Internet enables our children to broaden their educational, social and geographic horizons. Let's just make sure they have the tools and the knowledge to protect themselves in their new and very real online world. Thank you for your presence here today and for exhibiting your concern and commitment to this issue; American's families; and our future.