

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HJM 4027

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As Reported By House Committee On:  
Education

**Brief Description:** Requesting federal legislation requiring that televisions be equipped to enable parents to block out violent programs and reducing violence on television.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Patterson, Chandler, Sheahan, Brown, Campbell, Shin, Karahalios, Cothorn, Dorn, Conway, Romero, Basich, B. Thomas, Stevens, Pruitt, Johanson, Wineberry, King, Brough, L. Johnson, Quall and H. Myers.

**Brief History:**

Reported by House Committee on:  
Education, January 28, 1994, DP.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 17 members: Representatives Dorn, Chair; Cothorn, Vice Chair; Brough, Ranking Minority Member; B. Thomas, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Brumsickle; Carlson; G. Cole; Eide; Hansen; Holm; Jones; Karahalios; J. Kohl; Patterson; Pruitt; Roland and L. Thomas.

**Staff:** Robert Butts (786-7111).

**Background:** The American Psychological Association has estimated that a child witnesses 8,000 murders and 100,000 acts of violence on television before finishing elementary school. A number of national health organizations and independent researchers have concluded that viewing excessive levels of violence on television increases aggressive behavior in children.

Legislation is currently being considered in Congress that would require new televisions to be equipped with circuitry that would allow parents to electronically block the display of channels, programs and time slots.

In addition, the legislation would require television circuitry that would permit programs above a specified level of violence to be blocked out. Under such a system, all programs would be rated for violence using a scale, and the violence rating would be broadcast with the program's signal. Electronic circuitry in the television would detect

the violence rating and block out television programs with a violence rating above the level set by the parent.

**Summary of Bill:** The Legislature requests that:

1) Congress and the President amend the Communication Act of 1934 to require that televisions sold in the United States be equipped with circuitry designed to enable viewers to block out channels, programs and time slots, and to enable viewers to block out all programs with a common violence rating;

2) Congress and the President also amend the Cable Act of 1992 to require cable companies to provide their customers, at no cost, electronic equipment with this same capability;

3) the federal government or an independent organization develop a violence rating system for television programming, and the violence rating be electronically broadcast with all broadcast, satellite and cable programming; and

4) the federal government take other appropriate actions to reduce the level of violence on television.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Testimony For:** Violence in the media is a major problem in our society. We must take actions to reduce it.

**Testimony Against:** None.

**Witnesses:** Rep. Patterson (sponsor); Bob Fisher, Washington Education Association (supports); and Walter Ball, Washington Association of School Principals (supports).