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Congressmen Cox and Wyden demonstrate new Internet blocking technologies; "Internet Freedom and Family Empowerment Forum" highlights new technologies that allow parents and educators to block youth access to objectionable content

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WASHINGTON--(BUSINESS WIRE)--July 17, 1995--Representatives Christopher Cox (R-CA) and Ron Wyden (D-OR) today welcomed the introduction of new technologies that parents and teachers can use to render inappropriate online content off-limits to children.

The technologies were demonstrated as part of the "Internet Freedom and Family Empowerment Forum," a gathering of companies and organizations active in the online

community organized by Reps. Cox and Wyden.

The congressmen also welcomed the formation of a Parental Empowerment Program that includes parents, educators and service-providers working together to find new and even more effective ways to allow parents to prevent objectionable material from reaching children.

"The impressive technologies shown here today demonstrate that the types of tools that parents, online service providers and educators need to help prevent children from accessing objectionable materials already are being provided by members of the online services industry," said Rep. Cox.

"Access-control solutions that are mandated by a slow-moving government bureaucracy to address the Internet simply won't work. Regulators just can't keep up with this fast-paced technology. We need solutions that include parents, teachers and the online industry as part of the equation," he added.

Rep. Wyden asserted that the issue of youth access to inappropriate content is best solved by involved parents, not by mandating government involvement in content issues. "It's now clear that with readily available software, America's parents can child-proof the family computer," he said.

"The Senate bill is doomed to fail because their idea of a Federal Internet Police will make the Keystone Cops look like crack crime fighters," Wyden added.

Representatives Cox and Wyden are co-sponsors of the "Internet Freedom and Family Empowerment Act" (H.R. 1978), which seeks to encourage service providers to make available new blocking and filtering technologies.

Companies and organizations participating in the gathering included SurfWatch Software, Netscape Inc., Webster Network Strategies Inc., America Online Inc., Prodigy Services Inc., The Interactive Working Group, The Interactive Services Association and The Internet Society. Among the new products and services introduced today are:

- o A new version of Webster Network Strategies' WebTrack software that will be provided at no charge to primary and secondary schools;
- o A new Windows-based version of SurfWatch's \$49.95 content-screening software package;
- o America Online's announcement that will expand its two-year-old parental control offerings with a new feature that will enable parents to block access to all but "Kids Only" area and also has agreed to provide SurfWatch software to help control access to the

World Wide Web;

o An announcement by the Interactive Services Association -- a group made up of the 10 major commercial Internet access providers -- that will launch a major online and off-line Parental Education Program later this summer.

SurfWatch incorporates a roster of sites known to carry objectionable content that is automatically updated monthly. WebTrack School Edition (SE) is a new version of the company's WebTrack products, which is marketed to corporate sites concerned with controlling unwanted content. WebTrack SE's control list includes sites in the following categories: sex, drugs, hate speech, criminal skills and gambling.

In his role as chairman of the Online Policy Committee of the Interactive Services Association (ISA), America Online assistant general counsel and director of government affairs William W. Burrington said the organization's forthcoming Parental Empowerment Program will be designed to provide both online and off-line assistance to help parents become more informed about the online world.

"The Parental Empowerment Program will include information kits that parents can request via an 800-number and a World Wide Web Page. The ISA also will be reaching out to educational groups and parents' organizations to form partnerships and we hope to be running public service advertisements later this year," he said.

Also addressing attendees at The Internet Freedom and Family Empowerment Forum was Jerry Berman, executive director of the Center for Democracy and Technology and organizer of the Interactive Working Group (IWG), an affiliation of more than 80 online service providers, computer and communications firms and public interest groups.

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