

# Deseret News

## Enforce broadcast decency standards

By Brian Urie

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On Oct. 21, Peter Chernin, president and chief operating officer of News Corp., was given the Media Institute's "Freedom of Speech" award. In accepting the award, Chernin boasted that Fox will "fight to the end for our ability to put occasionally controversial, offensive and even tasteless content on the air." He also claimed that fining indecent content on broadcast TV will somehow automatically lead to the overthrow of the democratic process in American politics.

Limiting political speech is not what is at issue. What Chernin and his fellow media bosses truly oppose are any limits whatsoever on indecent broadcast TV content. Any amount of violence, any and all profanity, any and every kind or quantity of graphic sex, they feel, ought to be acceptable — and legal. This was made manifest back on Aug. 1 when ABC, CBS and NBC filed briefs with the U.S. Supreme Court to defend Fox's claim that airing the "F-word" and "S-word" during two Fox awards show broadcasts was not indecent and should not be fined.

The Supreme Court will soon rule on a lower court's decision that the use of the "F-word" is merely a "fleeting profanity" and that the networks should not be fined for airing such language, the broadcast networks are doing everything possible to ensure that their "right" to blare offensive programming over the publicly owned airwaves into American homes meets with no opposition.

Unlike many other nations, in the United States the government does not monopolize control of the airwaves — nor does it require TV networks to pay for their use of same. The broadcast networks are allowed exclusive use of a public utility for free and use it to make billions of dollars a year in profit. All the American people have ever asked in return is that the networks use the airwaves in the public interest. But now, the networks arrogantly claim that their alleged "right" to spew profanity, graphic sex and heinous violence trumps the best interests of America's children and the desires of the American people.

The position held by Peter Chernin and his media cronies is that the U.S. government should not enforce the common-sense standards of decency that the overwhelming majority of Americans want. That Americans want such standards in entertainment is undeniable: In 2006, the people's elected representatives in the U.S. Congress passed the Broadcast Decency Enforcement Act, increasing FCC fines for indecent content on broadcast TV. The House of Representatives voted in favor of this measure by a 10-1 margin; the Senate passed it unanimously.

But, because such measures do not meet with the approval of the tiny clique of multimillionaire moguls whose mega-conglomerates control broadcast, cable and satellite television, radio networks, film studios, music companies, newsmagazines and publishing firms, these bosses demand that the law be overturned. The desires of average Americans be damned, say the Overlords of Media; anything that would limit the entertainment industry's "freedom" to profit by deluging Americans with indecent content must not be allowed.

Ultimately, the entertainment industry's opposition to modest government limits on indecency is far less about preserving freedom and far more about cementing their control over the airwaves that ought to belong to the American people.

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