



January 28, 2004

## **CBS STATEMENT ON ADVOCACY ADVERTISING**

Given the misleading and inaccurate statements offered to the media and the public in recent days, it is understandable why there is confusion over the CBS Television Network's longstanding policy against advocacy advertising.

The policy is decades old. It is designed to prevent those with means to produce and purchase network advertising from having undue influence on "controversial issues of public importance." From the Network's perspective, we believe our viewers are better served by the balance and perspective such issues can be afforded within our news programming.

This policy applies only to Network advertising, not to the local time of individual stations affiliated with the Network. As such, it is therefore also intended to promote and protect localism. Local stations we own, as well as CBS affiliates owned by others, are free to accept or reject such advocacy advertising for their own air based on how they believe such decisions serve the public interest in their communities.

Conflicts over the policy are also decades old. The Network has rejected hundreds of advocacy ads over the years ranging from Mobil Oil and W.R. Grace Company submissions to ads on all sides of issues from gun control to abortion to the North American Free Trade Agreement, to name just a few. We have found that people tend to agree with the policy when they disagree with the thrust of the ad, and vice versa.

Suggestions have also been made that we are violating our own policy by allowing the airing of messages which aim to curb drug abuse and smoking by minors. CBS is unaware of responsible groups which advocate drug abuse and smoking by minors, so it is hard to understand how these laudable efforts would constitute "controversial issues."

In recent years, a cottage industry has arisen among groups that submit advocacy ads that they know will be rejected. They then resort to press releases and internet diatribes about the rejection to reap considerable free media attention and financial contributions to support their cause. Editors and potential contributors beware.

The one constant is that CBS's policy is simple, clear, published and available to anyone who asks. A copy of this written policy is attached.

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