

Bob Dole



NEWS

U.S. SENATOR FOR KANSAS

FROM:

SENATE MAJORITY LEADER

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Contact: Clarkson Hine
(202) 224-5358

V-CHIP & TELECOM BILL

DOLE URGES PRESIDENT TO RECONSIDER VETO THREAT ON TELECOM BILL; V-CHIP TECHNOLOGY IS "DRAWING-BOARD SCHEME"

There's been a lot of hype recently about the so-called V-chip.

President Clinton has endorsed the Chip, touting it as an antidote to the gratuitous violence and sexual innuendo that now permeate prime-time television. A majority of the Senate has voted to require that every new television set contain the V-chip. And the House of Representatives has joined the V-chip bandwagon, by including a V-chip mandate in the recently-passed telecommunications bill.

With all this support, one would think that the V-chip has been tested and tested in laboratories throughout the country. But guess what? The V-chip doesn't even exist....And it may never exist. It is purely a drawing-board scheme that may make sense in theory...But it's anybody's guess whether it will ever work in practice. We've never seen one.

According to an article appearing in USA Today, "There is no such thing as a v-chip. And there probably never will be." The San Francisco Chronicle reports that "no company makes [the V-chip], nor has any company expressed an interest in doing so. In fact, the chip isn't a chip at all. It's really an idea for special circuitry for television, but 'V-circuitry' doesn't sound quite as omnipotent as V-chip."

Is development of V-chip technology just around the hi-tech corner? Well, perhaps not. According to experts cited in the USA Today article, it "could take 10 years before a V-chip TV is designed, built, marketed, and sold into enough homes to make a difference." And, in fact, it's likely that the so-called V-chip technology will be overtaken by existing software systems--developed as a direct result of consumer demand--that will give parents more control over what their children watch on television.

So, seeing is believing...And perhaps, just perhaps, the White House may want to reconsider its threat to veto any telecommunications bill that fails to include a v-chip mandate. After all, this bill is the key to our nation's future economic success.

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