



THE FAMILY FOUNDATION

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“Pornography is a type of adultery. What we do in our imaginations is the moral and spiritual equivalent of what we do in our actions.”

*Gene Edward Veith,
WORLD Magazine
Matthew 5:27-28*

“Nothing could have been further from [the founders] intentions, or from the spirit which motivated the First Amendment [than pornography].”

*Dr. Reo M. Christenson,
Professor of Political Science,
Miami University,
Oxford, OH*

“Pornography”

Undermining marriages and families across Virginia

Background

It has been said that, at one time “pornography was downtown. Now it’s downstairs.” As we enter the new millennium and as the information age flourishes, we are reminded every day that pornography is not only downstairs, but in nearly every room in the house, on the television and radio, in books and magazines, and in particular, on the computer. Explicit pornographic images are just a “click” of the mouse away. What was once hidden away in dark buildings on the seedy side of town is now not only in the open, but celebrated as progress in our culture’s embrace of sexuality. William F. Buckley, Jr. has pointed to pornography’s “pervasive presence,” meaning, it’s everywhere. In *New York Times Magazine*, writer Frank Rich called smut “explicitly American,” and “an all-too-ringing affirmation” of our moral standards.

Sadly, the statistics seem to concur. Over \$4 billion a year is spent on video pornography in America, or as Mr. Rich points out, more than is spent on major league baseball, football or basketball. But that’s just part of the story. It is estimated that the pornography business totals between \$10 and \$14 billion annually, making it a bigger industry than those three professional sports *combined*. For comparison, the Broadway theatre industry takes in about \$600 million annually. More than 700 million porn movies are rented each year and Americans spend more money for pornography than they do for “mainstream” movies. Each year, approximately 400 regular movies are produced in the U.S. Pornographers make 11,000!

Studies have shown that more than 30 million people log onto pornographic Web sites each day. But while many focus on the more than 70,000 adult pay web sites lining the information superhighway (accounting for only about a fifth of the market), pornography has expanded its reach through pornography networks and pay-per-view on cable and satellite, phone sex, in-room hotel movies and a host of other medium. Home video took “adult” movies from the X-rated theatre and brought them into the home; DVD continues the trend. Satellite and cable make them a phone call away.

All of this does not even take into account the local strip clubs and other ‘sexually oriented businesses’ that continue to push the envelope of decency, while bringing drugs, prostitution and other crimes into neighborhoods across the nation and here at home in the Commonwealth.

Obscenity is Illegal

Despite the rhetoric of pornography’s producers and defenders, the fact is that in 1973 the Supreme Court, in *Miller v. California*, ruled that public obscenity is not protected by the Constitution and is illegal if the material in question meets a three-part test:

- 1) The average person, applying contemporary community standards would find that the work, taken as a whole, appeals to the prurient interest; and
- 2) The material depicts or describes, in a patently offensive way, sexual conduct specifically defined by law; and
- 3) The material taken as a whole lacks serious literary, artistic, political, or scientific value.

Ultimately, the decision about what exactly the community’s standards are comes down to the moral ethos of the community itself. In today’s sex-saturated world it has become somewhat accepted by city councils, state legislatures and the federal government that community silence is community acceptance. In the case of pornography and its advance on culture, silence is not golden. That is why effective efforts to fight pornography must begin and end at the local level. Each community must establish and enforce its own standard of obscenity, and this is where people of faith can have the most impact.



Nadine Strossen, president of the ACLU, once told a roomful of pornographers "how essential" their efforts are to overcome "our puritanical heritage" and applauded their "vital contribution to First Amendment freedoms!" - Matt LaBash, Weekly Standard

"Those who toil in the anti-pornography field say that a false sense of helplessness is one of the pornographers' best allies."

Jay Nordlinger, National Review Magazine

Reversing the pro-pornography trend will not be easy. To enter this fray requires an unconditional conviction that pornography, whether legal or illegal, soft core or hard, obvious or subtle, is morally wrong and harmful to families and our culture – there is no good pornography. Our culture is addicted to image, and sexual imagery dominates almost every facet of the postmodern media culture. The anti-pornography movement is running in direct conflict with the prevailing notion that sex-on-display is progress. Those who chose to join this fight will face bitter opposition, but as Dr. James Dobson has stated, the future of the family depends on it.

Fighting Pornography

There are numerous actions citizens can do to fight against pornography. Here are a few:

Sexually Oriented Businesses – Communities should review local zoning ordinances regarding adult businesses. If they find ordinances lack substance, they should work with the appropriate local officials, such as a boards of supervisors, in designing appropriate adult use, time, place and manner ordinances. Local citizens can also gain petition signatures for presentation to local law enforcement asking that they enforce obscenity laws that already exist. Forming a local decency organization where citizens can work together has proven very effective.

Libraries – Citizens should demand that their local public libraries have Internet software on library computers that filter out pornographic web sites. They should contact the librarian at the public library to make sure filtering software is used.

Internet – Citizens can purchase and use Internet filtering software on their own home computers to avoid accidental downloading of pornographic web sites. Parental supervision of computer use also needs to be stressed. Complaints against pornography web sites should be made either to the local FBI office, or the U.S. Attorney in the area.

Corporations/Businesses – Citizens should contact executives of any business or corporation that supports or promotes pornography, such as AT&T, General Motors and AOL Time Warner. Citizen groups can also boycott organizations and businesses involved in pornography.

What Can be Done to Stop the Spread of Pornography In Virginia?

The Family Foundation is:

- (1) Educating citizens on specific actions they can take to combat pornography in their own communities.
- (2) Working with law enforcement to make sure obscenity laws are enforced.
- (3) Building a ground swell of civic activism to eliminate pornography in communities.



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