



Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety

Senators Obama and Biden
PO Box 8102
Chicago, IL 60680

31st. October, 2008

Dear Senators Obama and Biden,

On behalf of the children of the United Kingdom we are writing to say how much we hope, should you become President and Vice President of the United States, that you will feel able to put yourselves at the head of a new global campaign to rid the internet of the terrible scourge of child pornography.

America is the original home of the internet. America remains the source of much of the inventiveness and the capital which have made the internet the hugely valuable global technology it has become. Because of this, across the world, people look to the USA to give a lead when addressing some of the internet's important and enduring problems. Of these perhaps the production and distribution of child pornography is by far the most heinous.

As several commentators have put it, the internet has changed "the market" in child pornography from a "cottage industry" to a "multi-billion dollar global industry". In that context the arrival of a new Administration in the USA brings with it the aspirations of millions who want to see the problem attacked with fresh vigour and determination, bringing an end to the horrifying child abuse which is integral to and lies behind the terrible trade in the images.

Since 1997 the UK's Internet Watch Foundation (IWF) has been monitoring which countries provide hosting services for the publishers of online child pornography. In every single year since 1997 the USA has topped the global league table. During the first six months of 2008, for example, US companies hosted 70% of commercial child pornography domains and 48% of non-commercial child pornography domains. This represented around 66% of all such content known to the IWF.

Clearly we all understand that these numbers are completely at variance with the will and the wishes of the American people. The principal reason the US has consistently led the worldwide list of publishers of child pornography is attributable to the simple fact that, in the USA, there are a very large number of web hosting companies who make it extremely easy for anyone with a credit card, from anywhere in the world, to sign up to use their services. If these companies were obliged to know more about their customers, perhaps particularly those of their customers using overseas billing addresses, this alone could have a dramatic impact.

Some nations have succeeded in almost entirely eliminating child pornography from being hosted within their physical or virtual borders. In the UK, for example, this has been achieved without the need for legislation. The IWF maintains a list of all known and verified child pornography web sites found anywhere in the world, irrespective of the jurisdiction wherein the host is located. The IWF supplies internet service providers with a copy of this list. The online providers deploy it across their servers thereby blocking access to those sites, again irrespective of the hosting jurisdiction. At present, under these voluntary arrangements, around 95% of the UK's consumer market is unable to reach directly any of the sites listed, and soon we expect that number to go a lot closer to 100%. In relation to the commercial providers of child pornography this is extremely important. They are in it mainly for the money so if they cannot reach their customers they will quickly desist and children will be spared.

We thank you very much indeed for your kind attention and trust you will feel able to pledge your support for this key humanitarian objective.

Yours sincerely



---000---

John Carr
Secretary
Children's Charities' Coalition on Internet Safety
Action for Children
85 Highbury Park
London N5 1UD

Tel +447961 367960
Email john.nch@btopenworld.com