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FILM RATING BOARD TO CONSIDER SMOKING AS A FACTOR

Los Angeles – The Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) today announced that the rating system is enhancing the amount of information provided to parents on the issue of smoking in films. In the past, illegal teen smoking has been a factor in the rating of films, alongside other parental concerns such as sex, violence and adult language. Now, all smoking will be considered and depictions that glamorize smoking or movies that feature pervasive smoking outside of an historic or other mitigating context may receive a higher rating.

The MPAA oversees the Classification and Ratings Administration (CARA) on a joint basis with the National Association of Theatre Owners (NATO). Today, MPAA Chairman and CEO Dan Glickman issued the following statement:

“The MPAA film rating system has existed for nearly 40 years as an educational tool for parents to assist them in making decisions about what movies are appropriate for their children. It is a system that is designed to evolve alongside modern parental concerns. I am pleased that this system continues to receive overwhelming approval from parents, and is consistently described as a valuable tool they rely upon in making movie-going decisions for their families.”

“With that in mind, the rating board chaired by Joan Graves will now consider smoking as a factor—among many other factors, including violence, sexual situations and language—in the rating of films. Clearly, smoking is increasingly an unacceptable behavior in our society. There is broad awareness of smoking as a unique public health concern due to nicotine’s highly addictive nature, and no parent wants their child to take up the habit. The appropriate response of the rating system is to give more information to parents on this issue.

“This action is an extension of our current practice of factoring under-age smoking into the rating of films. Now, all smoking will be a consideration in the rating process. Three questions will have particular weight for our rating board when considering smoking in a film: Is the smoking pervasive? Does the film glamorize smoking? And, is there an historic or other mitigating context? Additionally, when a film’s rating is affected by the depiction of smoking, that rating will now include phrases such as ‘glamorized smoking’ or ‘pervasive smoking.’ This ensures specific information is front and center for parents as they make decisions for their kids.

“Some have called for a ‘mandatory R’ rating on all films that contain any smoking. We do not believe such a step would further the specific goal of providing information to parents on this issue. Unfortunately, the debate on this extreme proposal has become heavily politicized, and many inaccurate statements have been made. While those pushing this proposal are no doubt well-intentioned, it is important that there is an accurate understanding of the declining prevalence of smoking in non-R rated films. The rating board has comprehensively reviewed depictions of smoking in every rated film over the past several years. From July 2004 to July 2006, the percentage of films that included even a fleeting glimpse of smoking dropped from 60 percent to 52 percent. Of those films, 75 percent received an ‘R’ rating for other factors. So, three out of every four films that contained any smoking at all over the past few years are already rated ‘R.’

“In our regular dialogue with parents, they frequently note that depictions of smoking in films have significantly declined in recent years. They often tell us that they cannot recall a recent incident in which they took their child to a G, PG or PG-13 film and found a scene involving smoking that was objectionable. Moreover, parents are very clear to us that they—not the industry and certainly not the government—should determine what is appropriate viewing for their kids. What they want is information, and that is the action we are now taking.”

About the MPAA

The Motion Picture Association of America, Inc. (MPAA) serves as the voice and advocate of the American motion picture, home video and television industries from its offices in Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Its members include: Buena Vista Pictures Distribution; Paramount Pictures; Sony Pictures Entertainment Inc.; Twentieth Century Fox Film Corporation; Universal City Studios LLLP; and Warner Bros. Entertainment Inc.

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For more information, contact:

MPAA
Seth Oster
(818) 995-6600