



Written by [Dave Bohon](#) on June 13, 2011

MTV Cancels Controversial Teen Drama “Skins”

Following an intense campaign by the pro-family Parents Television Council (PTC) to derail it, the controversial teen drama *Skins* has been canceled by the MTV network after only one season on the air. The program, based on a popular British TV show by the same name, never gained the ongoing popularity enjoyed by its counterpart in the UK, averaging only around one million viewers per week— down from the 3.26 Americans who had watched its premier episode. While MTV said in a statement that *Skins* “is a global television phenomenon that, unfortunately, didn’t connect with a U.S. audience as much as we had hoped,” other MTV shows with worse ratings continue to air, making it likely that *Skins* succumbed in large part because of PTC’s campaign aimed at parents, program sponsors, and even the U.S. Congress and Justice Department.



Even before *Skins*’ premier, PTC had warned parents that the weekly drama was “the most dangerous television show for children that we have ever seen,” pointing out that its cast included underage actors performing in arguably “pornographic” scenes, and noting that the program’s audience was largely teenagers who would be highly influenced by the objectionable portrayals of out-of-control adolescents involved in a subculture of sex, drugs, and other destructive behaviors. Said PTC spokeswoman Melissa Henson on the eve of the show’s premier, *Skins* boiled down to “lots of promiscuous teenage sex, lots of drug use, underage alcohol consumption, dangerous, reckless, irresponsible behavior ... all of which goes rewarded or without consequence.”

MTV didn’t disagree, marketing the show as a “wild ride through the lives of a group of high school friends stumbling through the mine field of adolescence,” and promising the teenage viewers it hoped to draw that whether it was “sex, drugs, the breadth of friendships or the depth of heartbreaks, *Skins* is an emotional mosh-pit that slams through the insanity of teenage years.”

PTC president Tim Winter noted that part of MTV’s marketing strategy was to make light of teens lying to parents, as well as glamorizing “all manner of harmful, irresponsible, illegal, and adult-themed behavior.” In an e-mail campaign to parents he pointed out that the show’s promotional trailer makes “sexual objects of almost every single one of its characters and asks not only for viewers to approve, but to actively participate by posting their own secret stories.”

In addition to targeting parents whose kids might tune in to the MTV show, PTC also contacted the show’s sponsors, pressuring them to pull their advertising. “Every single advertiser who sponsored the premiere episode of *Skins* is not only endorsing, but glorifying teen drug and alcohol abuse, not to



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mention a plethora of baseless sexual content,” said PTC president Tim Winter in a press release. After the first episode aired, several sponsors pulled their advertising, including Schick, Taco Bell, General Motors, Wrigley, Subway, and H&R Block.

As reported by [The New American](#), PTC’s campaign for destroying *Skins* included a letter to the U.S. Congress, demanding that the Senate and House Judiciary Committees, along with the Department of Justice, investigate to determine if the show’s producers and MTV might have broken child pornography and exploitation laws in using underage actors.

“Noting that PTC’s monitors had counted 42 depictions and references to drugs and alcohol in the show’s 41-minute premiere episode,” reported *The New American*, “Winter wrote in a letter to federal officials that the episode ‘included all manner of foul language, illegal drug use, illegal activity as well as thoroughly pervasive sexual content. Moreover, future episodes promise much more of the same.’”

In his letter to the feds, Winter charged that network executives had known about the potential child porn issue, and had even met “to discuss whether the show might violate federal law regarding the sexual depiction and presentation of minors.” The PTC head called on the U.S. Senate and House Judiciary Committees “to immediately investigate Viacom and MTV for the production of this material,” and to “compel the Attorney General to mount an investigation by the Department of Justice into whether the production of ‘Skins’ has violated federal law meant to protect minors from exploitation.”

In a press release following news of the show’s cancellation, Winters recalled that “season one of *Skins* was so full of explicit content, viewers were treated to some form of sex, violence, drugs, alcohol, or profanity once every 22 seconds of air time.” He said that the show’s “sexual content was the most pervasive, followed by drug-related references and depictions.” In fact, Winter said, “it took 53 episodes of broadcast programming to find the equivalent amount of drug content that aired in only eight *Skins* episodes.”

Noting that *Skins’* “shocking content was trumped only by the fact that the program featured teenage actors and was marketed to teenage children,” Winter said that he and PTC were “grateful to every member of the public who helped us drive an economic stake through the graphic content on the program, the likes of which never deserves to see the light of day again.”

Dan Isett, PTC’s director of public policy, told the [Christian Post](#) that MTV’s decision to cancel the show is “clear evidence of what we said all along, that advertisers have a direct role to play in what type of material gets produced in the first place.” He noted that in the case of *Skins*, “advertisers were associating their brand name with that type of drug content and sexuality on that show.”

He added that the success pro-family groups had in torpedoing the teen drama sends a strong message to network and cable TV producers “that there are certain lines that cannot and must not be crossed that were obviously crossed in the production of *Skins*, and we’re hopeful that they will take this message and make some better productions in the future.”



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