

September 7, 2006

## SENATE DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP URGES DISNEY CEO TO CANCEL MISLEADING 9/11 MINISERIES

**Washington, DC** — *Urging him to cancel the grossly inaccurate upcoming miniseries The Path to 9/11, the Senate Democratic Leadership today sent the following letter to Disney President and CEO Robert Iger. Disney's subsidiary ABC erroneously claims the misleading miniseries is based on 9/11 Commission report and is planning to air it on September 10 and 11. Shockingly, the network is also planning to use the program as a teaching tool through Scholastic, potentially misinforming thousands of children about the most important event in recent American history.*

*The text of the letter, signed by Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid, Assistant Democratic Leader Dick Durbin, and Senators Debbie Stabenow, Charles Schumer, and Byron Dorgan, is below.*

September 7, 2006

Mr. Robert A. Iger

President and CEO

The Walt Disney Company

500 South Buena Vista Street

Burbank CA 91521

Dear Mr. Iger,

We write with serious concerns about the planned upcoming broadcast of The Path to 9/11 mini-series on September 10 and 11. Countless reports from experts on 9/11 who have viewed the program indicate numerous and serious inaccuracies that will undoubtedly serve to misinform the American people about the tragic events surrounding the terrible attacks of that day. Furthermore, the manner in which this program has been developed, funded, and advertised suggests a partisan bent unbecoming of a major company like Disney and a major and well respected news organization like ABC. We therefore urge you to cancel this broadcast to cease Disney's plans to use it as a teaching tool in schools across America through Scholastic. Presenting such deeply flawed and factually inaccurate misinformation to the American public and to children would be a gross miscarriage of your corporate and civic responsibility to the law, to your shareholders, and to the nation.

The Communications Act of 1934 provides your network with a free broadcast license predicated on the fundamental understanding of your principle obligation to act as a trustee of the public airwaves in serving the public interest. Nowhere is this public interest obligation more apparent than in the duty of broadcasters to serve the civic needs of a democracy by promoting an open and accurate discussion of political ideas and events.

Disney and ABC claim this program to be based on the 9/11 Commission Report and are using that assertion as part of the promotional campaign for it. The 9/11 Commission is the most respected American authority on the 9/11 attacks, and association with it carries a special responsibility. Indeed, the very events themselves on 9/11, so tragic as they were, demand extreme care by any who attempt to use those events as part of an entertainment or educational program. To quote Steve

McPherson, president of ABC Entertainment, "When you take on the responsibility of telling the story behind such an important event, it is absolutely critical that you get it right."

Unfortunately, it appears Disney and ABC got it totally wrong.

Despite claims by your network's representatives that *The Path to 9/11* is based on the report of the 9/11 Commission, 9/11 Commissioners themselves, as well as other experts on the issues, disagree.

? Richard Ben-Veniste, speaking for himself and fellow 9/11 Commissioners who recently viewed the program, said, "As we were watching, we were trying to think how they could have misinterpreted the 9/11 Commission's findings the way that they had." ["9/11 Miniseries Is Criticized as Inaccurate and Biased," *New York Times*, September 6, 2006]

? Richard Clarke, the former counter-terrorism czar, and a national security advisor to ABC has described the program as "deeply flawed" and said of the program's depiction of a Clinton official hanging up on an intelligence agent, "It's 180 degrees from what happened." ["9/11 Miniseries Is Criticized as Inaccurate and Biased," *New York Times*, September 6, 2006]

? Reports suggest that an FBI agent who worked on 9/11 and served as a consultant to ABC on this program quit halfway through because, "he thought they were making things up." [MSNBC, September 7, 2006]

? Even Thomas Kean, who serves as a paid consultant to the miniseries, has admitted that scenes in the film are fictionalized. ["9/11 Miniseries Is Criticized as Inaccurate and Biased," *New York Times*, September 6, 2006]

That Disney would seek to broadcast an admittedly and proven false recounting of the events of 9/11 raises serious questions about the motivations of its creators and those who approved the deeply flawed program. Finally, that Disney plans to air commercial-free a program that reportedly cost it \$40 million to produce serves to add fuel to these concerns.

These concerns are made all the more pressing by the political leaning of and the public statements made by the writer/producer of this miniseries, Mr. Cyrus Nowrasteh, in promoting this miniseries across conservative blogs and talk shows.

Frankly, that ABC and Disney would consider airing a program that could be construed as right-wing political propaganda on such a grave and important event involving the security of our nation is a discredit both to the Disney brand and to the legacy of honesty built at ABC by honorable individuals from David Brinkley to Peter Jennings. Furthermore, that Disney would seek to use Scholastic to promote this misguided programming to American children as a substitute for factual information is a disgrace.

As 9/11 Commission member Jamie Gorelick said, "It is critically important to the safety of our nation that our citizens, and particularly our school children, understand what actually happened and why – so that we can proceed from a common understanding of what went wrong and act with unity to make our country safer."

Should Disney allow this programming to proceed as planned, the factual record, millions of viewers, countless schoolchildren, and the reputation of Disney as a corporation worthy of the trust of the American people and the United States Congress will be deeply damaged. We urge you, after full consideration of the facts, to uphold your responsibilities as a respected member of American society and as a beneficiary of the free use of the public airwaves to cancel this factually inaccurate and deeply misguided program. We look forward to hearing back from you soon.

Sincerely,

Senate Democratic Leader Harry Reid

Assistant Democratic Leader Dick Durbin

Senator Debbie Stabenow

Senator Charles Schumer

Senator Byron Dorgan

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