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Virginia PTA Presents Statewide Internet Safety Program

Virginia PTA, in partnership with the non-profit organization Enough Is Enough, will host *Internet Safety 101: Empowering Parents*, a multi-media, educational teaching program for parents, guardians and educators in four regional Town Hall Meetings which are open to the public – Norfolk (October 2), Fairfax (October 6), Roanoke (October 8), and Henrico County (October 13). Virginia is the only state to host the program before a national launch in 2009. Each PTA and PTSA in Virginia will receive a free copy of the *Internet Safety 101 program* thanks to a generous grant from Verizon who is also assisting in funding the town hall meetings.

In 2007, Virginia PTA formed an Internet Safety Task Force to work alongside Enough Is Enough on the development of key elements of the *Internet Safety 101 program* which is based on interviews with law enforcement professionals, Internet safety experts, industry leaders, psychologists, researchers, clinicians, parents, teens and victims. The *101 program* will cover topics including current and emerging online threats and will present information to educate and equip parents on safety basics that can be applied across all Internet-enabled devices. The Town Hall meetings will highlight one of the segments included on the four-part teaching resource contained on the program DVD and provide attendees with the necessary information to be able to present the entire 101 program in their schools and communities.

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Statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice highlight the critical need for dedicated parental attention to Internet threats and illuminate why the Virginia PTA, Enough Is Enough and Verizon are so focused on presenting effective safety solutions. The following are just a few of many:

- More than 20,000 images of child pornography are posted on the Internet each week.
- The sexual exploitation of children on the Internet is a \$20 billion industry.
- One in seven children, 10-17 years old, receive an unwanted sexual solicitation online.
- Only 25 percent of youth who encountered a sexual solicitation tell a parent, and 31 percent of teens say they usually reply and chat with people they do not know.

Additionally, research by the Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation cites that 70 percent of 10-17 year olds have accidentally come across pornography on the Internet, with more than three-quarters of the unwanted exposures occurring on the home computer.

Parents and community members will learn more about these threats and how to protect their children at the Virginia PTA Town Hall Meetings, which are free and open to the public. Donna Rice Hughes, Enough Is Enough President and Chairman, will introduce the program and share her expertise on Internet safety solutions. Hughes has given over 3,000 interviews, appearing on Oprah, 20/20, NBC Dateline and the Today Show, and she is the author of *Kids Online: Protecting Your Children in Cyberspace*. For more information about *Internet Safety 101: Empowering Parents*, go to www.enough.org

Regional Town Hall Meeting Times, Dates and Locations –

6:00-7:00 p.m. Registration, refreshments and distribution of Internet Safety Program Materials
7:00-9:00 p.m. *Internet Safety 101: Empowering Parents* program

- Tidewater Region: October 2 – Norview High School, Norfolk
- Northern Region: October 6 – Robinson Secondary School, Fairfax
- Blue Ridge Region: October 8 – William Fleming High School, Roanoke
- Central Region: October 13 – Deep Run High School, Henrico County

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