WASHINGTON (Reuters) - An influential U.S. Senator warned the adult entertainment industry on Thursday that if it does not develop a rating system for its Internet content, Congress will.

"My advice to your clients is that you better do it soon or we will mandate it if you don't," Republican Sen. Ted Stevens (news, bio, voting record) of Alaska, chairman of the Commerce Committee, told Paul Cambria, general counsel to the Adult Freedom Foundation.

Cambria told the committee hearing that it was the first time his group had been invited to testify before Congress on the issue and he would take the message back to his clients.

"I take that as a message and mandate to my clients that we should do that," Cambria said. "I might welcome a shot across the bow rather than one between the eyes."

Tim Lordan, executive director of the Internet Education Foundation, said about 75 percent of Internet pornography comes from overseas, beyond the reach of U.S. laws. He said parents play a crucial role in keeping unwanted material away from their children and that a rating system would help.

James Burrs of the FBI, illustrating how pervasive the problem is, said that a word search on "pornography" produced 19 million results.

Deputy Assistant Attorney General Laura Parsky said law enforcement is using increasingly sophisticated techniques, including following the path of financial transactions, to crack down on child pornography. Younger children are being abused and the images are becoming more disturbing, she said.

"In the past several years, the children we have seen in these images have been younger and younger, and, very regrettably, the abuse depicted has been increasingly more severe and is often sadistic," she said.
She declined to comment on a Justice Department subpoena of Google Inc., saying she could not talk about ongoing investigations. The department is seeking documents as part of the agency's probe of Internet pornography and the company rejected the demand as overreaching by the government.