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Senator fights cable 'indecentcy'

Alaska's Stevens says he'll push to apply public broadcast standards to satellite, too.

March 1, 2005: 2:20 PM EST

WASHINGTON (Reuters) - Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Ted Stevens said Tuesday he would push to apply broadcast decency standards to subscription television and radio services like cable and satellite.

"Cable is a much greater violator in the indecency area," the Alaska Republican told the National Association of Broadcasters, which represents most local television affiliates. "I think we have the same power to deal with cable as over-the-air" broadcasters.

"There has to be some standard of decency," he said.

Stevens told reporters afterward that he would push legislation to apply the standards to cable and satellite radio and television.

Federal regulations bar broadcast television and radio stations from airing obscene material and restrict indecent material, such as sexually explicit discussions or profanity, to late-night hours when children are less likely to be watching or listening.

But so far those restrictions have not applied to subscription television and radio services offered by companies like [Comcast Corp.](#) (up \$0.28 to \$32.74, [Research](#)) or [Sirius Satellite Radio Inc.](#) (up \$0.38 to \$5.95, [Research](#)), which recently signed shock jock Howard Stern.

Stevens said he disagreed "violently" with assertions by the cable industry that Congress does not have the authority to impose limits on what they air.

"If that's the issue they want to take on, we'll take it on and let the Supreme Court decide," he said.

The House of Representatives has approved legislation to raise fines to \$500,000 from \$32,500 on television and radio broadcasters that violate indecency limits. The Senate

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has legislation pending to increase fines as well.

But neither bill has provisions that would extend indecency restrictions to cable and satellite services. ■

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