

Stone pushes pic labeling

WASHINGTON—Director Oliver Stone met Friday with Speaker of the House Tom Foley (D-Wash.) and Senate copyright subcommittee chairman Dennis DeConcini (D-Ariz.) to push for passage of film labeling legislation.

Stone, in a telephone conversation, called the meetings "very positive" and expressed hope that Congress will pass a bill this year. Stone also took a shot at the Motion Picture Assn. of America for opposing the bill. The MPAA, said the helmer, is merely a "special-interest group" whose members "don't represent artists," he said.

Legislation that has made little headway in either the House or the Senate would require notification to viewers if a film has been colorized or materially altered.

Labels at the pic's outset would state whether the "artistic authors" (defined as the director, screenwriter or cinematographer) objected to the alterations. Objections could be raised over colorization, editing, "panning and scanning," time compression or expansion, or "lexiconing."

Stone said he would prefer seeing more "radical" legislation passed to prevent any alteration of films in the aftermarket. However, he said studios "owe us the minimum" of at least telling consumers if films have been altered.

"For Chrissakes, we're labeling dog food in this country," said Stone. "We (directors) have to be protected as artists against desecration" of film, he added.

MPAA, the National Assn. of Broadcasters and other organizations oppose legislation offered in the House by Rep. Robert Mrazek (D-N.Y.) and in the Senate by Sen. Alan Simpson (R-Wyo.).

Also lined up against the bill are the Bush administration and the American Civil Liberties Union. The ACLU opposes the measure on grounds that the government has no business forcing labels to be attached to products owned by private enterprise.

Critics of the legislation claim that the matter could best be decided as a collective bargaining issue. Stone said only a handful of directors have the clout to prevent alteration of films in ancillary markets.

—Dennis Wharton