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SPRINGFIELD -- Gov. Rod Blagojevich's proposal to bar stores from selling violent and sexually explicit video games to children unanimously passed an Illinois House committee Wednesday, despite concerns that it might be unconstitutional.

Under the proposal, which now goes to the House floor, any store that violated the ban could face misdemeanor charges and fines of up to \$5,000.

Blagojevich has been pushing the idea for several months, arguing in town hall meetings and national interviews that the games desensitize children to violence. He says they can lead to anti-social behavior and even obesity.

On Wednesday, he applauded the House civil law committee for approving the "sensible and necessary legislation."

But courts have struck down similar laws in Washington, Missouri and Indiana as too broad and in violation of free speech.

Even some lawmakers who voted for the bill said they were concerned it is too vague.

"This bill does not have clear standards to the people that need to know what the standards are — the parents, the kids, the clerk, the manager at Best Buy," said Rep. Lou Lang, D-Skokie. "These are people that will not have a clear standard under this bill as to what is or is not OK."

The legislation requires stores to label violent or sexually explicit games with black-and-white stickers reading "18." Stores would have the burden of figuring out which games could legally be sold to minors and which couldn't.

David Vite, president of the Illinois Retail Merchants Association, said the legislation's restrictions on games depicting "human on human violence" could mean that stores can be fined for selling football games to teenagers.

He also questioned the sincerity of the bill's supporters, suggesting they fear that voting against the measure would hurt them in future elections.

"It's pandering, and it's wrong," he said.

Harvard University professor Michael Rich argued Blagojevich's position before the committee Wednesday, saying the law is necessary because kids may act out in real life the violent or sexual behaviors they practice in virtual reality.

"Children are learning from video games," Rich said. "The question is: what are they learning?"