

From the Daily Herald

Schaumburg lawmaker joins video game panel

By Eric Peterson Daily Herald Staff Writer
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Gov. Rod Blagojevich has appointed Republican state Rep. Paul Froehlich of Schaumburg to a task force that will study and recommend action regarding the sale of violent and sexually explicit video games to minors.

Froehlich's appointment to the Safe Games Illinois Task Force was recommended by state House Republican leader Tom Cross, who knew of Froehlich's independent investigations into this topic, Blagojevich spokeswoman Abby Ottenhoff said.

Froehlich joins Elgin teacher Deb Perryman, Evanston parent Laura Mills and Naperville parent Laura Kovaric as the suburban representatives on the 30-member panel.

Other elected officials include Chicago Alderman Ed Burke and Democratic state Rep. John A. Fritchey of Chicago.

Blagojevich's wife, Patti, is also on the committee.

Ottenhoff said Froehlich's familiarity with the issue makes him a welcome addition to the task force.

"We're eager to have him join us and tell us what we can do," she said. "He did his own investigation about how easy it is for kids to get violent and sexually explicit video games. Their work will be ongoing as new games are released."

Froehlich did a study to see how many stores would sell mature-rated games to a 15-year-old without asking for ID. While there are good retailers out there who ask for ID, the majority don't, he said.

The problem is that a store's enforcement of the ratings is still voluntary, not required by law. Many probably know their voluntary enforcement of the ratings merely loses them customers who can go to another store that doesn't check ID.

In addition to recommendations about legislation, the task force hopes to come up with an effective way to communicate the content of video games to parents.

As the task force begins its work, Blagojevich is preparing to introduce legislation that would prohibit the sale or rental of such video games to children under 18 years old.

Courts have previously stopped similar efforts elsewhere. According to constitutional experts, courts might have set standards restricting access to sexual content, but there aren't any equivalent standards defining violent content.

"We're going to give (Blagojevich) advice about what kind of legislation might be appropriate," Froehlich said. "I'd rather pass something that can withstand muster."

- Daily Herald staff writer John Patterson contributed to this report.