

From the Decatur Herald Review

## *Three from Decatur named to governor's task force to investigate video game violence*

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SPRINGFIELD - Gov. Rod Blagojevich is enlisting the help of parents and community leaders, including three from Decatur, in his crackdown on violent video games.

The 22-member Safe Games Illinois Task Force announced Thursday will provide recommendations for keeping violent and sexually charged video games away from minors.

"This task force, made up of parents and experts, can do some of the important research and groundwork that most parents and caretakers don't have the time to do themselves," Blagojevich said in a prepared statement.

The task force will be led by First Lady Patti Blagojevich and will begin meeting immediately.

Decatur members are parents Sheila Jamison and Eric Leonard as well as the Rev. Thomas Walker, pastor at the Main Street Church of the Living God.

Walker said parents should be concerned about children re-enacting the violence portrayed in certain games.

"The video games create the crimes that are copied by young people. They think its cool and its great," Walker said. "These are another obstacle that will cause our children to trip and fall. We can't say that it's good. If something is not good why allow someone to take it."

Task force members are not paid but will be reimbursed for expenses, said Abby Ottenhoff, a Blagojevich spokeswoman. Additional task force members may be appointed.

Blagojevich wants the General Assembly to adopt two proposals during the upcoming session that would ban the sale, distribution, rental and availability of violent and sexually explicit games to people under the age of 18.

Merchants violating the proposed laws could face up to one year in prison and a \$5,000 fine.

The Illinois Retail Merchants Association opposes the restrictions noting that most games are purchased by adults.

"Last year, 90 percent of the video games sold were sold to people over 29 years of age," said Rob Karr, the association's vice president for government and member relations. "There aren't a lot of 14 and 15 year olds buying their \$50 M-rated video games themselves. They're getting them as gifts from parents or older relations."

Blagojevich recently toured the state drumming up support for the initiative by touting a study from the National Institute of Media and the Family that suggests adolescents, who played violent or sexually explicit video games, were more prone than their peers to violence and poor school performance.