

From the Joliet Herald News

Video Game labelling needs to be reset

Dec. 22, 2004

Last week, Gov. Blagojevich proposed legislation that would prohibit the sale and rental of violent and sexually explicit video games to anyone under 18. This legislation would also require retailers to label such content in video games.

We're glad to see the governor taking steps to assist parents in monitoring how their children are spending their free time. Stomping a few toadstools or eating blue ghosts seemed harmless enough years ago, but as technology has evolved, the level of realism present in today's games rivals any movie or television program.

We don't think video games are bad. Many require strategy and coordination, some are even cute. Yet because there's little self-regulation from the video game industry, such regulation is needed.

Some make this a freedom of speech issue. Much as we enjoy the duty of defending freedom of speech, this is simply not one of those issues.

There are age restrictions on movies warning theatergoers of the content and requiring parental supervision at films that contain explicit material. We wonder why there isn't already the same regulation from the video game industry. Is it because video games are so aggressively marketed towards children?

The video game industry does currently label some games with the rating "M" for mature audiences, but "mature" is a fairly-vague description when it comes to content. "M" label or not, anyone of any age with the money can buy a game with no penalty. The legislation isn't really groundbreaking. There are already restrictions and penalties for selling alcohol, tobacco or adult movies to minors.

David Vite, president of The Illinois Retail Merchants Association charged, "This is not just about video games. This is about the government asking ... companies to do what parents should be doing."

We completely agree, Mr. Vite. Parents should decide whether their children can play violent video games. If parents want their children to have such video games, they can buy them for them.