

Source: Sun Times

Title: Blagojevich focuses ire on drug-based game

Date: 3/22/05

From the Sun-Times

Blagojevich focuses ire on drug-based game

March 22, 2005

BY [MAUREEN O'DONNELL](#) Staff Reporter

Gov. Blagojevich is using the roll-out of "Narc," a new video game set in the drug underworld, to promote legislation that would ban the sale of violent and sexually explicit games to minors.

"These kinds of games teach kids to do the very things that in real life, we put people in jail for," Blagojevich said during a news conference Monday at Glenview's Springman Middle School. "Just as we don't allow kids to buy pornography or alcohol or tobacco, we shouldn't allow them to buy these games."

The governor and other legislative backers of the bill showed a taped promo for "Narc," an M-rated game that features various fictitious characters of the drug demimonde, including narcotics officers faced with its temptations. Midway, the Chicago-based maker of the game said its dark look was influenced by films such as "Traffic," "Training Day" and "Rush."

INSIDE CONTROVERSIAL RELEASE

*"Narc" is rated M or mature, suitable for ages 17 and older.

*You play as one of two cops, Jack Forzenski (voiced by actor Michael Madsen), who is recently out of drug rehab, and his more straightlaced partner, Marcus Hill (Bill Bellamy).

*The most controversial aspect of the new game is drug use as a "power-up." Each drug gives you a unique, if short-lived, power. Marijuana slows everything down to bullet-time -- a la "The Matrix." Speed gives you -- well, speed. LSD makes enemies' heads appear larger than normal so you can identify them more easily. *You also can play without the virtual drugs, and there are consequences to habitual use (addiction and being called in to the station for a drug test). It's doubtful that gamers won't take advantage of the novelty, though.

*Look for our review of "Narc" in Friday's Weekend section.

-- *Misha Davenport*

Midway, the distributor of the new video game "Narc," is familiar with controversy. The Chicago company also produces the ultra-violent fighting game "Mortal Kombat."

Some students unenthusiastic

The game, to be released today, has automatic weapons, gore and the fictitious officer Jack Forzenski, who spits out lines such as "You have the right to shut the hell up."

Players can become "narcotics officers" who arrest dealers and use confiscated dope to change the look and speed of "Narc" to score more points. Pot slows the game; LSD changes the appearance of characters to better distinguish enemies and crack increases the damage players can inflict.

The governor's Safe Games legislation cleared the Illinois House last week by a vote of 91 to 19. The governor called Monday for Senate approval, saying it would make Illinois the first state in the country to ban sales and rental of such videos to youths younger than 18.

Some Springman students weren't as enthusiastic as the governor about the proposal. "No comment," said Will Davis, 14, as he sat next to Blagojevich.

"I think violent video games are sometimes good for us, because instead of taking our anger out on people, we can take our anger out on these games," said eighth-grader Hannah Fidoten.

Similar moves in other states have been thrown out by courts as threats to freedom of speech, said Jason Della Rocca, executive director of the International Game Developers Association.

A spokesman for Chicago's Midway Games said "Narc" is targeted toward the same adults who enjoy shows like "The Sopranos," "Deadwood" and "C.S.I."

"There's no reason videos can't take on that same subject matter," said Reilly Brennan, Midway director of media relations. Just as they monitor TV shows and music, "it's up to the parents" to control their kids' video game use, he said.