

From The Southern

## **GOVERNOR WANTS TO PROHIBIT SALE OF VIOLENT, SEXUALLY EXPLICIT VIDEO GAMES TO CHILDREN**

BY NICOLE SACK  
THE SOUTHERN

Posted: Thursday, December 16, 2004 7:03 AM CST

SOUTHERN ILLINOIS -- Gov. Rod Blagojevich wants Illinois to be the first state to prohibit the sale or distribution of violent and sexually explicit video games to children under 18.

"This is all about protecting our children until they are old enough to protect themselves," Blagojevich said. "There's a reason why we don't let kids smoke or drink alcohol or drive a car until they reach a certain age and level of maturity. That's just common sense and that same common sense should be applied to excessively violent and sexually explicit video games."

The governor plans to introduce two bills during the upcoming legislative session that would ban the distribution, sale, rental and availability of violent video games and another banning sexually explicit video games to minors. The two bills would also require retailers to label games, similar to the "Parental Advisory" label found on music CDs, and to post signs explaining the video game rating system.

While there are currently rating systems and some retail chains that card minors who attempt to buy or rent explicit games, there is nothing under state law specifically prohibiting children from acquiring such material.

If the governor's proposal is made into law, Illinois would become the first state to ban the sale and distribution of explicit games to minors. The penalty for distributing banned games to children under 18 would be a Class A misdemeanor, punishable by up to one year in prison or a \$5,000 fine.

Unlike attempts by Washington state, Indianapolis and St. Louis County, Blagojevich's legislation narrowly defines excessively violent and sexually explicit video games to address concerns raised by federal courts.

"Violent" games would be defined as those realistically depicting human-on-human violence in which the player kills, injures or otherwise causes physical harm to another human, including but not limited to depiction of death, dismemberment, amputation, decapitation, maiming, disfigurement, mutilation of body parts or rape.

"Sexually explicit" games would be defined as those realistically depicting male or female genitalia and other nudity exposed in a way that appeals to the prurient interest of the player.

"Some of the popular video games on the market right now allow kids to simulate and participate in violent and sexual activities," Blagojevich said. "Soldiers heading to Iraq use simulations like today's video games in order to prepare for war. That may be OK if you're a mature adult or a soldier training to fight, but is that really necessary for a 10-year-old child?"

The National Institute of Media and the Family recently found that 92 percent of all children ages 2 to 17 play video games and the average child spends nine hours each week playing them.

"For the past eight years, we have consistently expressed concern about a subset of ultra-violent games that are very popular with preteen and teenage boys. 87 percent of boys play M-rated games and 78 percent list an M-rated game among their favorites," the institute states on its Web site.

A Web site will also be launched today to serve as a resource tool for parents:  
[www.safegamesIllinois.org](http://www.safegamesIllinois.org).

The site will offer parents the opportunity to report video games that they feel are inappropriate for their kids and retailers that are selling banned games to minors.