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Title: Limits on violent video games deserve consideration

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## **VOICE OF THE SOUTHERN: LIMITS ON VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES DESERVE CONSIDERATION**

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Gov. Rod Blagojevich raised plenty of eyebrows this past week when he announced a bold plan to protect children from violent and sexually explicit video games.

Between Blagojevich's political detractors and the American Civil Liberties Union, there have been many eager to criticize the governor's plan to push for legislation in January to put limits on games that are violent and sexually explicit. One bill would prohibit minors from buying violent games, described as those that depict realistic injuries or death. The other bill would restrict the sale of sexually explicit games, defined as those showing realistic male or female nudity in a manner that appeals to the "prurient interest" of a person. Retailers could face up to \$5,000 in fines per offense and up to one year in jail if the bills come to fruition.

Before dismissing Blagojevich's idea, perhaps the doubters would be better served by looking at a few of the startling facts associated with some of these violent and sexually explicit video games:

A study by the Federal Trade Commission found that teens were able to purchase mature-rated games 69 percent of the time.

87 percent of pre-teen and teenage boys play mature-rated games, according National Institute of Media and the Family.

78 percent of pre-teen and teenage boys listed a mature-rated game among their favorites, also according to the National Institute of Media and the Family.

A study at Iowa State University found that exposure to violent video games increases aggressive thoughts, feelings and behaviors, as well as increases physiological arousal and decreases helping behavior.

A study at Stanford University found that when the amount of time children spent watching TV and playing video games was reduced to less than seven hours a week, verbal aggression decreased by 50 percent and physical aggression decreased by 40 percent.

The Federal Trade Commission has found that 70 percent of the violent, mature-rated games studied are targeted to children under 17.

Ten of the 11 companies studied by the FTC produced at least one marketing document specifically targeting boys under 17 for a violent mature-rated game.

Many hardworking, caring parents are too busy to truly know the types of violent video games their children may be purchasing and playing. Putting limits on the types of violent, sexually explicit games children can buy would help parents who want to protect their children from these harmful influences.

Is the governor's plan a cure-all? Not likely.

But it could be a step in the right direction and is certainly worthy of the Legislature's consideration.