



2004-14

EXECUTIVE ORDER CREATING THE SAFE GAMES ILLINOIS TASK FORCE ON VIOLENT AND SEXUALLY EXPLICIT VIDEO GAMES

WHEREAS, the popularity of video games among all Americans including youth in Illinois has exponentially increased and in 2003, the video game industry collected \$5.8 billion in revenues; and

WHEREAS, ninety two percent of all children ages two to seventeen play video games; and children between the ages of eight and eighteen years old play an average of 20 to 30 minutes of video games each day; boys spend an average of thirteen hours per week playing video games; and many children play video games as their primary, if not exclusive leisure activity; and

WHEREAS, with each new day, new technology creates video games that more realistically depict human behavior and these games have become increasingly violent and sexually explicit; and

WHEREAS, the video game industry created the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) to rate video games as EC – Early Childhood; E – Everyone; T – Teen; M – Mature; and AO – Adult Only; and

WHEREAS, the ESRB rating system is intended to notify parents which games are appropriate for their children to play, but it neither prohibits children from playing sexually explicit or violent video games, nor prohibits retailers from selling such games to children; and

WHEREAS, only ten percent of games released in 2003 were M-rated, but 87% of boys play M-rated video games; and

WHEREAS, a Federal Trade Commission Study found that teens were able to purchase M-rated games 69% of the time they tried to do so and it is evident that the industry does not effectively enforce its own standards; and

WHEREAS M-rated games often contain, among other things, profanity, consumption of illegal drugs, alcohol, and tobacco; partial nudity, graphic depictions of rape and other sexual acts; blood, the mutilation of body parts, dismemberment, and the infliction of serious human injury, including death; and

WHEREAS, studies indicate that playing violent video games increases aggressive behavior in the player and may increase societal violence; and

WHEREAS, researchers have found that playing violent video games causes a thirteen percent to twenty-two percent increase in adolescents' violent behavior; and

WHEREAS, A Stanford University study found that reducing the amount of time third and fourth graders spend watching television and playing video games to under seven hours per week decreases verbal aggression by fifty percent and physical aggression by forty percent; and

WHEREAS, the ultimate responsibility of monitoring what video games a child plays lies with that child's parents; however, children are often more technologically savvy than their parents, who may have difficulty even playing the games to discover their contents; and

WHEREAS, a working family may not have the time and technological sophistication to monitor each and every game its children play; and one third of all children ages two to eighteen have a video game playing system in their bedrooms, making it especially difficult for parents to know what games their children are playing at all times;

THEREFORE, I hereby order the following:

1. Within the Department of Public Health, there shall be created the Safe Games Illinois Task Force to study the aforementioned issues related to violent and sexually explicit video games and serve as an advisory board to the Governor.
2. The Task Force shall consist of twenty-four members, all to be appointed by the Governor. Of the twenty-four members, one shall serve as Chairperson. The Governor shall determine who serves as Chairperson. Additional members may be appointed in the future at the Governor's discretion.
3. The Task Force's duties shall be the following, including but not limited to:
 - Compiling research data on the effects of violent and sexually explicit video games on the psychological well being of children under 18 and the incidence of violence in society at large;
 - Reviewing the content of video games to determine which games are violent or sexually explicit and may be inappropriate for Illinois children;
 - Compiling a list of and informing parents about potentially inappropriate games for children and displaying the list on the safegamesillinois.org website;
 - Informing the Governor of parents' concerns and providing recommendations on how to educate parents and the public about violent and sexually explicit video games;
 - Creating a parents working group to actively solicit input from parents around the state

ROD BLAGOJEVICH, Governor

Issued by Governor: December 30, 2004
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