

Constitution Today

Name: _____

People Upset by Video Games

November 29, 2005
By CBS/Associated Press

Washington, DC—The National Institute on Media and the Family recently printed a report called the Video Game Report Card. This is the tenth year they have written a report card on video games. The Institute looks at television shows, video games, and movies. It then decides if they are safe for children.

The report card gave bad grades to video games. It says that many video games are too violent. It also says that it is too easy for young children to buy violent games.

The report card said that since the 1990s, curses have increased by 3,000 percent in M-rated games. It also said that sexual content has increased by 800 percent in M-rated games.

The Institute sent young children into stores. These children were told to try to buy violent video games. Forty-four percent of the children were able to buy M-rated games. Some of them were eight or nine years old. M-rated games have sexual and violent content. They are supposed to be for people 17 and over.

Hal Halpin is the head of the Interactive Entertainment Merchants Association. This is an organization of stores that sell video games. Halpin was not upset by the results. He thought it was a good sign that young children were *not* able to buy M-rated games fifty-six percent of the time.

"This shows strong and growing store owner commitment to video game rating enforcement. But we are not yet where we want to be as an industry," said Halpin.

The Entertainment Software Ratings Board (ESRB) rates video games. Video game makers support ESRB. The ESRB rates games for parents. The Video Game Report Card says that the rating system is "broken and beyond repair."

The ESRB disagrees with the Video Game Report Card. They believe they do a good job of rating video games.

Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman supports the findings of the Video Game Report Card. Lieberman says that video games "can be dangerous to your children's health."

Halpin defends violent games. He says that they are rated M because they are for adults. They are not made for children under 17. "It's not appropriate for kids and it is clearly labeled that way," said Hal Halpin.

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Federal court strikes down Illinois video game law

The Associated Press
2005

SPRINGFIELD, Ill. (AP) — In Illinois there was a bill that tried to stop people from selling violent video games. This bill did not pass. Governor Rod Blagojevich said that he is going to appeal the ruling. He claims that children are being hurt by violent video games.

U.S. District Court Judge Matthew Kennelly thinks that people should be able to sell these video games. He ruled that the bill was unconstitutional. Mr. Kennelly ruled that the state of Illinois could not pass this law.

"This battle is not over," Governor Blagojevich said. "Parents should be able to expect that their kids will not have access to violent video games."

People who are against this law claim that the law would stop free speech. They also said that similar laws have been found unconstitutional in other states.

The bill would have stopped stores from selling or renting violent games to minors. The bill would have also charged \$1,000 fines to any store that broke the law.

The judge said that the bill did not follow the rules of the First Amendment. He also said that there was no proof that the bill could stop violence.

Governor Blagojevich asked for the ban last year after hearing about the video game "JFK Reloaded." In this game the player pretends to be the person who shot President Kennedy.

People in many states want bans on violent video games. More people have tried to do this since the Columbine High School shootings. But all of the laws banning violent video games were overruled.

The people who are against this law said it would have a negative effect. They claim that this law would make it too hard to sell these games to adults. This would hurt their business. They also said that there are violent images in other places, so it's unfair to single out video games.

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Issue: Violent Video Games Judge Blocks California Video Game Law

Associated Press
August 7, 2007

A federal judge blocked a new state law that would have stopped the sale of violent video games to children.

U.S. District Judge Ronald Whyte found the law unconstitutional. Other states have had similar laws struck down after challenges by video game industry groups.

The law stops the sale or rental of violent video games to anyone under the age of 18. The law also requires that games be clearly labeled. Sellers who did not follow the law would be fined up to \$1,000 each time.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger plans to appeal. He signed the law in 2005.

"Many of these games are made for adults, and choosing games that are appropriate for kids should be a decision made by their parents," he said. "I will vigorously defend this law and appeal it to the next level."

The law had been on hold since the Video Software Dealers Association and the Entertainment Software Association asked to block the law. They said these games are protected forms of expression under the First Amendment.

Whyte agreed with their arguments. He also said he did not see that video games caused certain behavior in children. He also didn't think video games were more violent than television, movies or the Internet.

The judge also said that the video game industry already has ratings that warn parents.

Sen. Leland Yee wrote the law. He was shocked by the court's decision against this "common-sense law."

Yee mentioned recent Federal Trade Commission studies. These studies show that the video game industry's rating system did not stop minors from buying games made for adults.

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