
**Juvenile Justice & Family Law
Committee**

PSHB 2595

Brief Description: Monitoring compliance with standards regarding the sale of violent video and computer games.

Sponsors: Representatives Dickerson, Conway, Delvin, Pettigrew, Wood, Schindler, Moeller, Kenney, Morrell and Kagi.

Brief Summary of Proposed Substitute Bill

- Requires the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, for a limited time, to conduct periodic monitoring of a sample group of retail businesses on compliance with industry ratings for the sale and rental of violent video games.

Hearing Date: 1/29/04

Staff: Trudes Tango Hutcheson (786-7384).

Background:

The Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) is an independent, self-regulatory entity supported by the entertainment industry, which provides ratings for, among other things, video games. The ESRB rating system is voluntary, and according to the ESRB, most video games sold in stores are rated by the ESRB. The ESRB raters consider content areas, including but not limited to violence, sex, language, and substance abuse. The ESRB currently has six ratings: "Early Childhood," "Everyone," "Teen," "Mature," "Adults Only," and "Rating Pending."

The Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (DCTED) is the main state agency responsible for, among other things, providing community and economic development assistance in the state; providing technical and financial assistance to local government, businesses, and community-based organizations; and conducting research and analysis to support community and economic development efforts at the state and local level.

Summary of Proposed Substitute Bill:

The Legislature finds that combating children's exposure to realistic violent video and computer games depends in large part on retailers complying with industry game-rating standards when selling or renting the games to children.

The Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED) must develop a monitoring program for sales of violent video and computer games. Under the program, the DCTED must monitor a sample group of businesses, made up of 30 businesses. Ten of the businesses must be located in eastern Washington. The DCTED must conduct monitoring operations of sample groups of businesses at least twice per year.

The DCTED must make a preliminary report to the Governor and legislative committees and the public by July 1, 2004, with annual reports each December thereafter.

The DCTED may appoint an uncompensated advisory group to assist in developing its program. The advisory group should include representatives of parent-teacher organizations, law enforcement officers, sheriffs and police chiefs, retailers, and pediatricians. The DCTED may contract with an expert organization to conduct the program.

Authority for the monitoring program expires on January 1, 2007.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on 1/23/04.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.