

Washington State Bans Sale of Violent Video Games to Kids

Washington has become the first state to enact a law banning the sale or rental of certain violent video games to children under 17.

Gov. Gary Locke signed a bill May 20 making it illegal to sell or rent to minors computer and video games that depict violence against public law enforcement officers, such as police and firefighters.

Retailers convicted under the law, which goes into effect July 27, could face fines of up to \$500.

“It is important to foster an environment where young people respect those who uphold the law,” [Locke](#) said in a statement. “Allowing children to play video games where the object is to kill or injure law enforcement officers is not the way to reinforce this message.”

While other states, cities and counties have tried regulating violent computer games, courts have ruled that such restrictions violate the First Amendment.

The principal sponsor of the Washington bill, however, Rep. Mary Lou Dickerson, D-Seattle, said she believes her law is more likely to withstand judicial review, because it is narrower in scope than other bans, according to the [Seattle Post-Intelligencer](#).

“This is about parents’ rights,” Dickerson said. “The right of parents to control their children’s games outweighs the right of retailers to make a fast buck by selling adult-rated games to children.”

[Dickerson](#) said in a statement that 35 different studies show links between violent video games and aggressive thoughts or behavior in kids.

The International Digital Software Association, a trade group representing 25

software developers, said it plans to file a suit seeking to have the law overturned in court.

IDSA President Douglas Lowenstein said research shows that parents are involved in the games their children buy or rent 83 percent of the time.

“If the goal is to keep games out of the hands of kids for whom they are not appropriate—and our industry has been a proactive leader in supporting such efforts long before this bill was conceived—then the answer is to focus on parental education and awareness of the ESRB ratings, not to try to turn retailers into parents,” [Lowenstein](#) said in a statement.