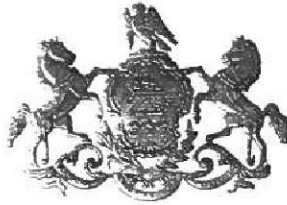


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*Senate of Pennsylvania*

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# **VIOLENT VIDEO GAME TESTIMONY**

by

## **Senator Jack Wagner**

Before the

House Judiciary Committee

Subcommittee on Crimes and Corrections

Public Hearing on Violence and Video Games

**AS A PARENT AND A LEGISLATOR, I AM DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE NEGATIVE IMAGES OUR CHILDREN ARE SUBJECTED TO ON A DAILY BASIS. WHAT'S EVEN MORE DISTURBING TO ME IS HOW EASILY ACCESSIBLE THESE IMAGES ARE TO YOUNG PEOPLE.**

**TODAY, MORE THAN EVER, WE LIVE IN A HIGH-PACED TECHNOLOGICALLY DRIVEN SOCIETY WITH GREATER DEPENDENCE ON THE INTERNET FOR INFORMATION AND ENTERTAINMENT. AS CHILDREN BEGIN TO GROW UP ON-LINE, THEIR SENSE OF REALITY CAN BECOME BLURRED -- BLURRED TO THE POINT OF NON-EXISTENCE. THEY CAN LOSE THEMSELVES IN FANTASY-BASED ENTERTAINMENT SUCH AS VIDEO GAMES. AND UNFORTUNATELY MANY OF THOSE GAMES CONTAIN SCENES OF GRAPHIC, INTERACTIVE, VIOLENCE.**

**IN THE EIGHTIES, THE VIDEO GAME CRAZE BEGAN IN ARCADES. GAMES SUCH AS PAC MAN, CENTIPEDE, GALAGA AND OTHER SPACE-RELATED GAMES**

**PROLIFERATED IN ARCADE GALLERIES IN MALLS, NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITY CENTERS. THE IDEA OF A SPACE FANTASY WAS ALL THAT YOUNG CHILDREN WERE LOOKING FOR. TODAY -- HOWEVER -- THAT HAS CHANGED.**

**VIDEO ARCADES ARE STILL POPULAR. HOWEVER, WITH THE MASS PRODUCTION OF HOME ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEMS, CHILDREN HAVE MORE ACCESS TO VIDEO GAMES THAN EVER BEFORE . INSTEAD OF HAVING ALIENS FROM ANOTHER GALAXY AS THEIR TARGETS OR EVEN SPEEDING AROUND A CURVE OVERLOOKING A BEACH IN CALIFORNIA, CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED TO SOMETHING FAR MORE GRAPHIC AND FAR MORE DANGEROUS.**

**TODAY, AN ALARMING NUMBER OF OUR KIDS ARE DERIVING PLEASURE FROM “WASTING” OTHER PEOPLE OR “OBLITERATING” LIVING THINGS IN EXTREMELY VIOLENT INTERACTIVE VIDEO GAMES. KIDS WIN POINTS FOR THE NUMBER OF NINJAS THEY CAN DECAPITATE OR WHOSE**

**LIMBS THEY CAN SEVER -- ALL WITH DETAILED AND GRAPHIC PRECISION THAT CAN MAKE EVEN THE STRONG-STOMACHED QUEASY.**

**WHAT HAPPENS TO AN 8, 10 OR 12-YEAR-OLD CHILD WHO REGULARLY PLAYS THESE GAMES? WHAT KIND OF PERSON WILL HE OR SHE TURN OUT TO BE? WILL A CHILD'S SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG BE SKEWED BY SUCH IMAGES? THE ANSWER APPEARS TO BE YES. STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT CHILDREN WHO REGULARLY PLAY VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES ARE DESENSITIZED TO BLOODSHED, VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION. THEIR SENSE OF RIGHT AND WRONG IS NOT AS STRONG AS OTHER CHILDREN.**

**LET ME BE CLEAR: PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IS THE BEST WAY TO MONITOR AND RESTRICT ACCESS TO VIOLENT INTERACTIVE VIDEO GAMES. BUT SOME PARENTS ARE NOT INVOLVED, AND NO PARENT CAN BE EVERYWHERE ALL OF THE TIME. THAT'S WHY I'VE INTRODUCED, WITH BIPARTISAN SUPPORT, SENATE BILL 960 THAT WOULD**

**MAKE IT MORE DIFFICULT FOR CHILDREN TO BUY, RENT OR PLAY VIOLENT INTERACTIVE VIDEO GAMES.**

**CONSUMERS IN THE UNITED STATES ARE SPENDING NEARLY \$10 BILLION DOLLARS EACH YEAR ON VIDEO GAMES; THAT'S TWICE THE AMOUNT SPENT ON MOVIES. VIDEO GAMES -- INCLUDING VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES --- ARE MORE POPULAR WITH CHILDREN THAN GOING TO THE THEATER FOR A MOVIE AND SOME POPCORN.**

**A 1993 STUDY FOUND THAT THE MOST POPULAR VIDEO GAME CATEGORY AMONG SEVENTH AND EIGHTH GRADERS IS FANTASY VIOLENCE -- LET ME REPEAT THAT -- FANTASY VIOLENCE.**

**SEVERAL WEEKS AGO, A RETIRED ARMY LIEUTENANT COLONEL WAS FEATURED ON THE TELEVISION SHOW, *60 MINUTES*. IN HIS BOOK "THE PSYCHOLOGICAL COST OF LEARNING TO KILL IN WAR AND SOCIETY" DAVID GROSSMAN SAID HE FOUND DISTURBING**

**PARALLELS BETWEEN TODAY'S VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES AND METHODS USED BY THE MILITARY TO TEACH SOLDIERS HOW TO KILL. HE BELIEVES OUR CHILDREN ARE LEARNING HOW TO KILL FROM GRAPHICALLY VIOLENT INTERACTIVE VIDEO GAMES.**

**DO WE NEED MORE EVIDENCE THAN THE LITTLETON, COLORADO, MASSACRE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT OUR CHILDREN ARE MORE AGGRESSIVE, MORE DISTURBED AND INUNDATED WITH MORE NEGATIVE IMAGES THAN EVER BEFORE? HOW OFTEN WILL WE HAVE TO WITNESS SENSELESS VIOLENCE PERPETRATED BY 15-YEAR-OLDS -- 13-YEAR-OLDS -- OR EVEN AN 11-YEAR-OLD AS WAS THE CASE IN JONESBORO, ARKANSAS LAST YEAR?**

**MY PROPOSAL TO LIMIT ACCESS TO VIOLENT INTERACTIVE VIDEO GAMES BEGINS WITH THE PARENTS.**

**I AM ASKING ALL PARENTS TO MONITOR THE VIDEO GAMES THEIR CHILDREN PLAY. WHEN I WAS GROWING UP, MY BIGGEST CONCERN MOST DAYS WAS**

**WHICH TEAM I'D PLAY FOR IN A SANDLOT GAME AT THE PARK. TODAY OUR PLAYGROUNDS AREN'T AS FULL AS THEY USED TO BE -- THANKS IN PART TO PLAYSTATIONS AND GAMEBOYS. INSTEAD OF FILLING THEIR LUNGS WITH FRESH AIR, OUR KIDS ARE FILLING THEIR MINDS WITH IMAGES OF VIOLENCE. PARENTS SHOULD MAKE SURE THEIR CHILDREN HAVE HEALTHIER AND SAFER CHOICES.**

**IN ADDITION, SENATE BILL 960 WOULD MAKE IT A SUMMARY OFFENSE TO SELL, RENT OR OTHERWISE PROVIDE VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES TO PEOPLE UNDER AGE 18. A VIOLENT VIDEO GAME WOULD BE ONE CONTAINING SCENES OF GRAPHIC VIOLENCE AS DEFINED BY THE ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE RATINGS BOARD. THESE RATINGS WOULD BE MADE AVAILABLE AT ALL BUSINESSES THAT SELL, RENT OR HAVE VIDEO GAMES.**

**AND FINALLY, I HAVE INTRODUCED A RESOLUTION URGING CONGRESS TO REQUIRE VIDEO GAME DEVELOPERS TO SUBMIT THEIR PRODUCTS TO THE ENTERTAINMENT**

**SOFTWARE RATINGS BOARD FOR REVIEW AND RATING.**

**WHAT I AM PROPOSING IS NOT CENSORSHIP. COMPANIES WOULD STILL HAVE THE RIGHT TO CREATE, SELL OR RENT VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES. I AM SIMPLY ASKING THAT SUCH GAMES BE KEPT AWAY FROM CHILDREN, AND THAT PARENTS HAVE THE INFORMATION THEY NEED TO IDENTIFY GAMES THAT MAY BE INAPPROPRIATE.**

**I BELIEVE THAT ONE OF GOVERNMENT'S ROLES IS TO PROTECT THOSE WHO CANNOT PROTECT THEMSELVES. OUR CHILDREN NEED OUR PROTECTION. STUDIES HAVE SHOWN THAT YOUNG BOYS WHO ENGAGE IN VIOLENT VIDEO GAMES ARE LESS LIKELY TO PERFORM WELL IN THE CLASSROOM; THEIR APTITUDE FOR ACADEMICS DECLINES; THEIR ABILITY TO DEVELOP INTELLECTUALLY IS STUNTED.**

**AS A PARENT AND A LEGISLATOR, I AM HOPEFUL**



**THAT MY LEGISLATION WILL ENCOURAGE DEBATE ABOUT  
THIS PROBLEM AND THAT WE CAN WORK TOGETHER TO  
ESTABLISH REASONABLE RESTRICTIONS ON ACCESS TO  
GRAPHICALLY VIOLENT INTERACTIVE VIDEO GAMES.**

**THANK YOU.**

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