
**Juvenile Justice & Family Law
Committee**

HB 1366

Brief Description: Requiring video game retailers to inform consumers about video game rating systems.

Sponsors: Representatives Roberts, McDonald, B. Sullivan, Dickerson, Morrell, Skinner, Appleton, Hinkle, Moeller, Hasegawa, McCune, Sells, Walsh, Ormsby, Kenney, Kagi and McDermott.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Requires video game retailers to post signs notifying consumers of the video game rating system.

Hearing Date: 2/1/05

Staff: Sonja Hallum (786-7092).

Background:

Video games may include store-bought games, computer games downloaded from the internet, and hand-held game players. Since their inception, video games have become increasingly realistic and interactive. The subject matter of the video games varies greatly, ranging from animated and educational games for children to more sophisticated action games. Some video games have been criticized for their use of violence.

Some video games are rated by the Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB). The ESRB is an independent, self-regulatory entity supported by the entertainment industry which provides ratings for software titles, websites, and on-line games. The ratings are located on the front of the game packaging. There are 6 ratings: "Early Childhood," "Everyone," "Teen," "Mature," "Adults Only," and "Rating Pending."

Games rated "Early Childhood" and "Everyone" are suitable for younger audiences. "Teen" rated games contain content that may be suitable for persons ages 13 and older. A rating of "Mature" indicates that the content may be suitable for persons age 17 and older. It may include more intense violence, language, or mature sexual themes than the "Teen" rated games. A title rated "Adults Only" has content suitable only for adults and is not intended for persons under the age of 18. The game may include graphic depictions of sex and/or violence.

Summary of Bill:

Video game retailers are required to post signs providing information to consumers about the existence of a nationally recognized video game rating system, or notifying the consumers that such a system exists.

The signs must be a minimum of 14 by 11 inches with lettering that is clearly visible to consumers. The signs must be placed in prominent locations near the video game displays and points of sale.

The retailer is required to provide each person who rents or buys a video game with information that explains the rating system and must provide information explaining the rating system to any person who requests the information.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.