

News From NJ Senate Democrats



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WITH HOLIDAY SHOPPING SEASON UNDERWAY, NEW JERSEY SENATE PRESIDENT RICHARD CODEY LAUNCHES PSA CAMPAIGN ON VIDEO GAME RATINGS

*New Ads Explain and Encourage Parents to Use ESRB Ratings to Choose
Age-Appropriate Games for their Families*

TRENTON, NJ – With the holiday shopping season underway, New Jersey Senate President Richard J. Codey and Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB) president Patricia E. Vance today unveiled a new Public Service Announcement (PSA) campaign to explain and encourage parents to use video game ratings.

In the TV and radio ads, previewed for the news media at a press conference at the Statehouse in Trenton, Codey encouraged parents to check the rating each time they purchase or rent a video game to ensure that it is appropriate for their children and family. Senator Codey also encouraged parents to spend time with their children in order to be sure the choice of the game was appropriate.

“As a father, I know parents face tough decisions these days about the media they allow into their homes,” said Senator Codey. “There’s simply no substitute for parental involvement and responsibility, and it’s important that parents play an active role in choosing games for their children. With the ESRB ratings, parents don’t have to feel like a Scrooge if their kids want a game that’s not appropriate for their age. The ESRB is a great resource that provides plenty of tools for parents to determine if a game is appropriate or to find a suitable substitute.”

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The public service announcements are being provided to regional radio and television

stations and local cable TV operators this month as parents head to the stores to buy video games as holiday gifts. ESRB has also prepared a brochure providing additional information about the rating system. The PSAs can be viewed on ESRB's website at http://www.esrb.org/about/media_library.jsp.

"Video games are no different than movies and TV shows in that they are created for a diverse audience of all ages," said ESRB president Patricia Vance. "That is why it is so important that parents remember to check the rating when purchasing games for their children. I'm pleased to be joining Senator Codey in announcing this effort to reach out to New Jersey's parents and educate them about the ratings."

The ESRB video game ratings employ a two-part system. As seen in the illustration below, rating symbols on the front of virtually every game package sold at retail provide an age recommendation, such as EC (Early Childhood 3 and up), E (Everyone 6+), E10+ (Everyone 10+), T (Teen 13+) and M (Mature 17+). On the back of each package, next to the rating, are content descriptors that provide information about what is in the game that may have triggered the rating, or may be of interest or concern to parents.



"Parents want to make informed choices for their children, and when it comes to video games, the ESRB ratings provide parents with the guidance they need to decide whether a game is one they consider appropriate for their child," said Diane Zierler, president of the New Jersey Parent Teacher Association (PTA). "This new PSA campaign is a great way to get the word out to parents about the ESRB ratings, and it is especially timely now that the gift-buying season is getting into full swing. I applaud Senator Codey and the ESRB for taking these steps to educate New Jersey's parents."

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Since its inception in 1994, the ESRB ratings have become a trusted resource for parents

when choosing computer and video games. In April 2007, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) released a report¹ which found that nine in ten parents are aware of the ESRB ratings, 87% expressed satisfaction, and nearly three quarters use them regularly when choosing games for their children.

“While many parents are aware of the ratings, and are making sensible game purchase decisions as a result, there is always more that can be done to raise awareness,” concluded Codey. “Working with ESRB, we hope that these ads will help arm parents with the information they need to make the right choices about the video games they deem appropriate for their children and families.”

ESRB recently announced the availability of “rating summaries,” a supplementary source of information which explain in objective terms the context and relevant content that factored into a game’s ESRB rating assignment. A new mobile website at m.esrb.org was launched to allow parents to search for rating summaries on their cell phones right from the store when trying to make a decision about which game to buy. Parents can also find rating summaries before they go to the store by searching on ESRB’s website at www.esrb.org, using ESRB’s [rating search widget](#), or signing up for a free e-newsletter called [ParenTools](#), which provides a list of recently rated titles complete with rating summaries customized to their preference of rating categories and game platform.

A complete list of ratings, content descriptors and their definitions can be found on the ESRB website at www.esrb.org.

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About Richard J. Codey

Senate President and former Governor Richard J. Codey has been a tireless advocate for children and families, sponsoring the nation's first statewide assault weapons ban and the nation's first childproof handgun law, as well as a package of bills that provide New Jersey with some of the toughest tools in the nation to crack down on Internet predators. As Governor, he launched an unprecedented statewide school security audit and he also sponsored the law that raised the legal tobacco purchasing age from 18 to 19.

About Entertainment Software Rating Board (ESRB)

The ESRB is a non-profit, self-regulatory body established in 1994 by the Entertainment Software Association (ESA). ESRB independently applies computer and video game content ratings, enforces advertising guidelines, and helps ensure responsible online privacy practices for the interactive entertainment software industry.

¹ Federal Trade Commission Report to Congress on the Marketing of Violent Entertainment to Children, April 2007