

LIBERTARIANS CRITICIZE VIDEO GAMES LAWS

OAKLAND--Libertarian Party state chairman Bill Evers has attacked a new Oakland ordinance as "an assault on the rights and responsibilities of young people and their families" and as "nothing but a politicians' bunco game."

The new law bars young people from game arcades between 7 a.m. and 3 p.m., after 10 p.m. Monday through Thursday, and after midnight on Fridays and Saturdays.

Evers said that "all the hue and cry" about video games has produced "a wave of foolish laws." He said it reminded him of "the con artist-band salesman in the 'Music Man' with all his talk about the perils of pool." "Next we'll have bowling alleys and baseball stadiums condemned as snares and traps for young people," predicted Evers.

Libertarians, according to Evers, oppose this sort of law as "anti-family" because it takes the responsibility for decisions out of the hands of young people and their parents.

Evers maintained that compulsory attendance at "deteriorating public schools" and laws which bar young people from taking jobs drive some young people to game arcades as a "relief from conflicts that these adult-written laws are imposing on them." The Libertarian Party, said Evers, believes that "the real problem" is that public schools are "neither safe nor attractive" places to learn and that since they can "always count on the taxpayers' dollar" they have no incentive to improve.

At present Palo Alto bans all game arcades with five or more machines. Benicia has refused to permit game arcades to open and has confined video games to pizza parlors. Richmond uses the city planning mechanism to forbid arcades. San Rafael is now drafting a new zoning ordinance to heavily regulate game arcades. The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to review a case involving a Mesquite, Tex., ordinance that bars minors from playing mechanical and electronic games unless accompanied by a parent or guardian. -30-

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