

Senator introduces bill to study impact of violent video games and children  
By Josh Furlong  
December 19th, 2012

SALT LAKE CITY — Following the tragic shooting at an elementary school in Newtown, Conn., where 20 children and six adults were killed, a U.S. senator is looking to study the impact of violent video games and the media on children.

Senate Commerce Committee Chairman Sen. Jay Rockefeller introduced a bill Tuesday that would allow the National Academy of Sciences to study the connection, if any, between violent video games and the media on children.

[Politico](#) obtained a copy of the "[discussion draft](#)," which details the scope of the intended study. The act would call for the Federal Trade Commission and Federal Communications Commission to work with the National Academy of Sciences to conduct a "comprehensive study and investigation."

The draft bill says the study should include an investigation of whether violent video games and violent programming "causes children to act aggressively or causes other measurable cognitive harm to children; has a disproportionately harmful effect on children already prone to aggressive behavior; and has a harmful effect that is distinguishable from any negative effects produced by other types of media."

***Opinion: It's not about the guns; or is it?***

*It's hard to understand why people kill other people. Perhaps I have grown up in a time, and in a culture, when war is something seen in movies or on History Channel documentaries. Perhaps I was raised in communities where crime was low and where death was more likely to come to the elderly, in a hospital, or by auto accident. Always a tragedy and sad affair, but natural.*

"Recent court decision demonstrate that some people still do not get it," Rockefeller said in a statement. "They believe that violent video games are no more dangerous to young minds than classic literature or Saturday morning cartoons. Parents, pediatricians, and psychologists know better. These court decisions show we need to do more and explore ways Congress can lay additional groundwork on this issue. This report will be a critical resource in this process. I call on my colleagues to join me in passing this important legislation quickly."

Sen. Rockefeller is not alone in his plea for an investigation into violent video games and programming. Sen. Joe Lieberman and Colorado Gov. John Hickenlooper have also said video games have an impact on vulnerable young adults.

"The violence in the entertainment culture — particularly, with the extraordinary realism to video games, movies now, et cetera — does cause vulnerable young men to be more violent," Sen. Lieberman said.

"There might well be some direct connection between people who have some mental instability and when they go over the edge — they transport themselves, they become part of one of those video games," Gov. Hickenlooper said.

The violence in the entertainment culture — particularly, with the extraordinary realism to video games, movies now, et cetera — does cause vulnerable young men to be more violent.

—Sen. Joe Lieberman

There have been unconfirmed media reports that 20-year-old Newtown shooter Adam Lanza enjoyed a range of video games, from the bloody "Call of Duty" series to the innocuous "Dance Dance Revolution." But the same could be said for about 80 percent of Americans in Lanza's age group, according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project. Law enforcement officials haven't made any connection between Lanza's possible motives and his interest in games.

If passed, the draft bill proposed by Sen. Rockefeller would take effect 30 days after signed into law. The bill requires that a study be turned in no later than 18 months after the legislation is enacted.

### **Related:**

The Federal Trade Commission issued more stringent online child privacy rules for online and cellphone apps Wednesday. Software industries are bracing for the new regulations that they say will [stifle creativity and force small businesses to deal with legal costs](#) to ensure their apps don't violate FTC rules.

The cost of the changes to developers just selling educational apps for kids on Apple's iTunes store could be as high as \$271 million — nearly 100 times what the FTC has projected for all the businesses it expects to be newly covered, according to the Association for Competitive Technology, a Washington-based trade group that represents small and midsize software development companies. The FTC's estimate is "laughable," said Morgan Reed, the group's executive director.

An outlay of several thousand dollars to design the required privacy policy for an app is small change for larger, established companies. But for the bulk of developers, that's a lot of money. Most have only a few employees and operate on tight profit margins, Reed said.