
Laws vary on whether or not 17-year-olds get in to see R-rated films

by Melinda Lewis

Junior Editor

What magical transformation occurs on a person's 18th birthday? Just one day before, they cannot vote, get a tattoo, buy a lottery ticket, enlist in the military, or see an R-rated movie without parental permission.

Although federal law prohibits those under 17 from viewing these movies, the state of Tennessee extends the age restriction to include 17 year olds. Tennessee Code 39-17-907 states, "...viewing a motion picture designated "R" for restricted audiences, persons under eighteen years of age not admitted unless accompanied by parent or adult guardian..."

The violation of this law is a Class A misdemeanor, resulting in a \$2,500 fine and/or 11 months and 29 days in jail. This law might seem like an inconvenience to underage movie patrons, but it appears to be even more inconvenient for movie theater employees.

A former employee of Carmike Cinemas, senior Rikesh Patel, said, "There are a lot of kids who try to see rated R movies, and they argue that they are allowed to. I think the law is fair because minors shouldn't see those kinds of things."

2010 RHS graduate Maia Lewis, who is currently an employee of Premiere 6 Theater, said, "Lots of people just try to sneak in. I understand the way they see it because one year doesn't really make a big difference. However, since they are minors, it's ultimately their parents' decision. They just don't seem to understand that it's not my choice; it's the law."

With the internet at their disposal, as well as the cooperation of older friends, minors tend to find a way to see these movies anyway. This law is an attempt to protect the magic of innocence; however, for many minors, it's already too late because they've found a way to view R rated content.