



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Catharine Young

## Senators Unveil Measures to Protect Children From Internet Predators, Child Pornography and Sexual Abuse

CATHARINE YOUNG March 1, 2007

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The internet poses huge threats to children if used improperly, and Senator Catharine Young has announced a package of bills to combat internet predators.

"The Internet has provided sexual predators with a worldwide forum where like-minded pedophiles have formed online communities which openly discuss and provide mutual support for their perverted philosophies and activities in anonymity," Senator Young said. "With increased accessibility and real time communication, this community of predators have become more impudent and explicit in their exploitation of children."

Senator Young's comprehensive series of measures include:

- > Toughen penalties for promoting child prostitution or producing child pornography;
- > Crack down on child sexual predators in Internet chat rooms;
- > Establish stiff penalties for predators that use computers to commit sex offenses;
- > Support training for law enforcement in the area of computer child exploitation;
- > Strengthen the sex offender registry; and
- > Establish Internet Service Provider Warnings, among many others.

The legislation highlights a number of significant and growing problems related to the spread of child pornography, which is now estimated to be a \$2-\$3 billion a year enterprise. The possession or distribution of child pornography is illegal under federal law and in all 50 states, but many researchers and law enforcement officials have found these crimes to be increasing at an alarming rate, fueled largely by the rapid growth of Internet use and modern technologies.

It also highlights the strong link between child pornography possessors and individuals who sexually victimize children. In fact, a recent study found that fifty-five percent of those arrested for child pornography possession have sexually abused or tried to sexually abuse children.

Because of this strong correlation – and because the conviction rate for child pornography possession is nearly 100 percent – the report emphasizes the importance of cracking down on child pornography as a critical part of any overall strategy to keep children safe from sexual offenses.

The Senator's recommendations come just days after a major international child pornography ring was uncovered involving over 2,360 suspects in 77 countries, and the news that the FBI is now investigating approximately 600 of the suspects in the United States. The report also comes amid a dramatic expansion of networking and video sharing sites such as MySpace.com and YouTube.com, which present additional challenges to parents seeking to monitor their children's activities on the Internet.

The southern tier has not been immune to such incidents. Two years ago, a 55-year-old man abused a 9-year-old girl and broadcast it live over the Internet from Jamestown. While the

predator was molesting the child, Internet viewers sent instant messages offering encouragement and suggestions of abuse.