



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senate Moves To Track Sex Offenders

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What could be more important than protecting our children from sex predators? In school, at day care centers, on the Internet -- it doesn't matter -- we must do all we can to ensure our children's safety.

That's why the New York State Senate has passed a package of bills that would make it more difficult for sex offenders to evade tracking by law enforcement and to work in jobs that include substantial contact with children. Here's a roundup.

One bill makes sex offenders wear ankle bracelets with GPS monitoring so they can be tracked. Senate bill 479 would strengthen the current monitoring of Level 3 sex offenders, as designated under Megan's Law, by requiring they be tracked using GPS technology.

High profile crimes, such as the murder of Jessica Lunsford in Florida, which prompted the senate's efforts to track sex offenders by GPS, may not be in the headlines, but that does not mean the victims should be forgotten. We do not honor those victimized by crime unless we do all we can to punish those who committed the crime, and work to prevent future crimes from being committed. Jessica could have been saved if GPS technology had been the law, which it now is in Florida.

The senate also passed a bill (S.172B) that would prohibit Level 3 sex offenders from moving to a residence that is within 500 feet of any school building regularly used for instructional purposes.

We must continue our efforts to recognize the dangers that repeat sexual offenders pose to our children.

Another bill (S.44) would make it a class A misdemeanor for first-time sex offenders to apply for jobs that would allow them to have access to children, perform for children, be alone with children or participate in any other activity involving children. Repeat sex offenders would be guilty of a class D felony if they are found guilty of violating the law.

When the safety of our children is at stake, we cannot afford the smallest loophole or slightest ambiguity in our laws. We need to make it absolutely clear that sex offenders cannot be allowed to come into close contact with children through their employment. We must deny sexual predators any avenue which they might try to use to abuse more children.

In addition, the senate passed S.434, which would increase the number of times a sex offender has to verify his registration with the Division of Criminal Justice Services.

A separate piece of legislation (S.2458A) would make it a class E felony for any Level 3 sex offender who fails to register or report a change of address.

Megan's Law is intended to provide concerned parents with the information they need to protect their children. The legislation will prevent convicted sex offenders from circumventing the registration requirements and ensure that the location of dangerous predators is accurate and up-to-date

Another bill deals with Internet social sites. Senate bill 5917A would require convicted sex offenders to register their Internet related information. The bill goes beyond the E-STOP legislation just signed into law by the governor by making it a class D felony for a convicted sex offender to lie about his age while disseminating indecent material to minors.

Children are trusting and they have no idea their Internet 'friend' could be a pedophile trolling the Internet looking for his next victim. Now that almost every

home has a computer with Internet access, sex offenders have found an easier way to find their prey. It is imperative that we keep track of their Internet related information as well as their addresses on the sex offender registry.

Now we need the assembly's support.