NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Andrew J. Lanza

Protecting Children From Internet Predators

ANDREW J LANZA

You don't need to watch Dateline NBC's 'To Catch a Predator' to know that technology has created dangerous opportunities to strike at young people. We have an obligation to fight every day to ensure our children grow up in safe communities. We need to make sure that the laws designed to protect our children are keeping pace with technological advances, which is why I serve on the Senate Task Force on Critical Choices.

This Task Force recently issued a new report entitled, "*Protecting Children in the Internet Age*," that calls for the enactment of a wide array of aggressive measures designed to protect children throughout New York from the dangers posed by Internet predators, child pornography and child sexual abuse.

The report recommends passage of a comprehensive series of measures that will:

> 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 Task Force report 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 in the use of the Internet and modern technologies.

The report 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.

I am proud to serve as a member of the Senate Majority Task Force on Critical Choices which has put together a comprehensive package of bills aimed at protecting our most vulnerable and innocent victims, our children, from the evils of child pornography and Internet predators. Sexual crimes against children are amongst the most heinous in our community and we must act quickly to address these crimes that occur using modern computer technology. I encourage my colleagues in the Assembly to take swift action to pass this legislation and I ask the Governor to sign these bills into law.

Sincerely,

ANDREW LANZA
State Senator