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Legislature Approves Comprehensive Sex Offender Bill

Sen. Loudon's Internet task force provision included in legislation

JEFFERSON CITY – Sen. John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, today announced that the Missouri General Assembly has passed legislation implementing a program to train law-enforcement officers to go after sexual predators who lure children via the Internet. House Bill 1698 is a wide-ranging sex-crimes bill that contains many provisions introduced by Loudon.

“This bill takes a comprehensive approach to cracking down on some of the worst criminals in Missouri and providing resources to do so,” Loudon said. “We have worked hard for a long time trying to get this measure passed, and finally seeing it approved is very gratifying.”

Loudon has made one of his top priorities the program to provide grants to local law enforcement agencies to develop Internet sex crimes task forces. The Legislature last week approved for the program \$250,000 in state funds to hire and train online detectives and computer forensic personnel.

HB 1698 contains many other provisions to protect Missouri children. The legislation imposes mandatory life sentences against certain repeat sex offenders, establishes a toll-free hotline to report sexual abuse and allows probation and parole officers to have access to registered sex offenders' personal computers to look for evidence of child pornography. The measure also enhances penalties against those convicted of certain forcible sexual offenses and denies bail to those convicted of child molestation or possession of child pornography.

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“With today’s technologies, sexual predators have never had more opportunities to prey on the children of Missouri,” Loudon said. “The Internet is an especially dangerous resource, and we have responded with funding to train law enforcement to track down and arrest these criminals.”

As more and more individuals are using the Internet, the threat to children from sexual predators continues to increase. There have been reports of “child molester chat rooms,” where child predators share information on how to lure and seduce children. Many news programs have highlighted these growing concerns. According to the FBI, child pornography can take forms even more repulsive than many might imagine, sometimes including bestiality, sadomasochism, and the rape of infants.

“I am very pleased to witness this success, but our work is far from done,” Loudon said. “I will continue my efforts to fully fund Internet task forces and develop other means of protecting our sons and daughters.”

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