



Gibbons Capitol Report
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Protecting Our Children with Prevention and a Child Safe Internet

One of my highest priorities this session is establishing tougher penalties for those who harm our children, either through the Internet, the workplace, or random acts of crime. First, we want to prevent sex offenders from getting near our kids. And in the horrible case they do harm our children, we will catch them, prosecute them, convict them and imprison them, where we will lock the door and throw away the key.

This week, a Senate committee heard testimony in support of a bill I sponsored. The measure, Senate Bill 557, is a comprehensive effort focused on prevention and punishment. It will protect our children by keeping convicted child molesters in prison and keeping identified sex offenders in our communities from ever having the chance to harm a child.

Prevention

My plan helps identify sex offenders in our communities and prevents them from getting near our children. It requires that any state employee that works with children must have a criminal background check. We must also do a more effective job with mandatory background checks for all employees that work with children and ensure a consequence for those employers who fail to make this modest effort.

Not only does the bill require companies to help identify sex offenders before they get a chance to work around our children, but it also gives parents the tools they need to identify sex offenders in their neighborhoods and communities. Currently, addresses of sex offenders are not always up to date, even more troublesome is the lack of recent photographs of these convicted predators. SB 557 requires sex offender registries to be updated with new photographs every year and to check to make sure offenders' addresses are updated twice a year. With these changes, parents will be able to trust that the addresses and photographs on the sex offender registry are accurate and up to date, so they can keep their children out of harm's way.

Tools to Keep Our Children Safe

Studies show that **one out of every five** children between 10 and 17 years old will be sexually solicited online.* This is an outrage. Our children deserve a safe Internet, where they can explore the wonders it offers without the threat of being confronted with

shocking images, pornography, or predators attempting to lure them into harmful situations.

SB 557 creates the tools to provide a Child Safe Internet. It requires any company that provides Internet or computer services around the world to obey Missouri search warrants looking for child pornography or conversations where adults are trying to sexually lure children. This gives law enforcement the tools they need to uncover evidence through Internet service providers so we can do a better job of prosecuting the vermin that would seduce our kids.

Punishment

Any sexual predator who might consider harming one of our children must know that the punishment will be swift, certain and severe. Our children deserve it.

This bill puts anyone who violently sexually abuses a child behind bars up to 30 years or life in prison. It makes these offenses the highest level of crime in our state while still giving prosecutors flexibility in cases that may be more difficult to convict.

With these new prevention tools and penalties, I believe Missouri will be a leader in protecting her children. We are on our way to creating a more secure Missouri—by providing our children with a happy and safe childhood and promising to lock away those who threaten their safety and quality of life.

* According to *Highlights of the Youth Internet Safety Survey* conducted by the U.S. Department of Justice