



MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

John Loudon
7th Senate District

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Contact: Mike Reid
(314) 895-0007

Senator John Loudon Prompts Parents to Know What Teens are ‘Doing’ in Cyberspace

*New Study Finds Significant Portion of Teens & Young Adults
Sending or Receiving Sexually Suggestive Messages & Images*

ST. LOUIS COUNTY — Senator John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, is concerned by the results of a recent national survey that explores the electronic activity of teens and young adults. The survey, conducted this fall in part by the National Campaign to Prevent Teen and Unplanned Pregnancy, reveals a significant portion of teens and young adults are sending or receiving sexually explicit content online or in text messages.

Senator Loudon — a longtime champion of protecting children and the author of several child-protection laws in Missouri — said the survey reinforces the need for parents to monitor their children’s electronic communication.

“The amount of young people who are sending sexually explicit messages and images in cyberspace is very troubling,” Sen. Loudon said. “And when this kind of activity begins during the teen years, it often becomes even more frequent when those teens become young adults.”

The survey of 653 teens ages 13-19 and 627 young adults ages 20-26 found 20 percent of teens have sent electronically, or posted online, nude or semi-nude pictures or video of themselves. Eleven percent of those were teen girls ages 13-16. Thirty-three percent of young adults surveyed also reportedly send or post similar images.

According to the survey, sexually suggestive messages (text email, IM) are even more prevalent than sexually suggestive images. Of those teens surveyed, 39 percent said they are sending or posting sexually explicit messages, and 48 percent said they have

received such messages. Conversely, 59 percent of young adults surveyed said they send or post sexually suggestive messages, while 64 percent said they have received such messages.

The survey found most of the teens and young adults surveyed are sending sexually-oriented content to boyfriends or girlfriends, while others said they are sending the material to those they want to “hook up with” or to someone they only know online. In many cases, the content is unsolicited.

“The consequences of this kind of unguarded and harmful activity are just enormous — for everyone,” Sen. Loudon said. “Anything you send or post never truly goes away, will probably be shared time and time again, can very likely harm or destroy a reputation, and is potentially very, very dangerous. There are just so many terrible scenarios to imagine.”

Senator Loudon reminds parents of the importance of educating themselves and talking opening and honestly with their children about online and cell phone activity.

“Parents need to know who their teens are communicating with, be aware of what they are posting publicly, and need to set limitations,” Sen. Loudon said. “When a parent becomes involved and acts, the chances are better that this kind of harmful behavior can be stopped.”

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