



Gibbons Capitol Report

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Protecting Our Children

Protecting our children is always a top priority. We have passed some of the toughest laws in the nation that lock the door and throw away the key on sex offenders who harm our children. We have also created a new cyber crimes task force system that hunts sexual predators who try to prey on our children over the Internet. This week, we passed a sweeping bill that adds to those protections to better keep our children from harms way.

Identifying Online Predators

Our kids deserve to be safe whether they are playing in a park or surfing the web. The best way to keep them safe is with prevention. Having online identifying information up front will better help parents and teachers protect their children online, and give law enforcement better tools to catch cyber predators in the act. That's why we're adding online identifying information of any registered sex offenders to the sex offender registry. The Highway Patrol will have the authority to share the online information with electronic and computer businesses to prescreen users and compare information. Such information will also be made available to the public through specific searches using the online identifier. We also shorten the amount of time convicted sex offenders have to register with law enforcement officials to 3 days. They will also have to provide palm prints, a DNA sample and be photographed rather than supply their own photo.

Funding Cyber Crime Task Forces

The bill also creates the Cyber Crimes Investigation Fund. This new fund benefits the Internet Cyber Crimes Grant program that we put in place two years ago by providing \$3 million annually. The grant program has supported and created local law enforcement and multi-jurisdictional task forces across Missouri that employ cyber detectives and computer forensic experts. These task forces target Internet predators and child pornographers. Since the grant program began, arrests of cyber predators targeting our children has quadrupled in the last year from 26 to 105 cases.

A Safer Halloween

In an amendment, senators voted to ban sex offenders from participating in all Halloween festivities related to children. I've always encouraged parents to check their children's Halloween route against the state's sex offender registry, but parents will no longer have to take this preventive step if the bill becomes law. That's because it requires sex offenders to stay inside their residence from 5 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. on Halloween, post a

sign at their residence stating there's no treats there, and make sure all outside lighting is off. That means parents will no longer have to worry that their child could be trick-or-treating at a sex offenders' home.

Our children deserve to be safe and we're working in the Missouri Senate to make sure that is always the case. This sweeping bill will improve our ability to enforce the laws already in place as well as create new ways to help shield our children from the more modern methods sexual predators use to find and lure their victims.