



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Craig M. Johnson

Senator Johnson Urges Passage of Sex Offender E-Notification Legislation

CRAIG M. JOHNSON May 17, 2009

Senator Craig M. Johnson (D-Nassau), called for the passage of important legislation that will enable concerned parents and residents to receive instant email alerts every time a sex offender moves into their zip code.

“Ever parent would want to know if a danger lurks in their neighborhood,” Senator Johnson said. “This commonsense measure will use existing technology to enhance our current system and proactively alert residents when a dangerous sexual predator moves into their community.”

Thanks to the statewide emergency communication system, NY Alert, which is managed by the Department of Homeland Security, it would be easy for New Yorkers to register for instant e-mail notifications. Currently, New Yorkers desiring up-to-date information on registered sex offenders in their communities must make daily searches of the Sex Offender Registry maintained by the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS).

The measure, (S.1362C), is sponsored by Deputy Majority Leader Jeff Klein (D-Bronx/ Westchester) and co-sponsored by Senator Johnson and Senator Brian X. Foley (D-Suffolk). It has already passed the Senate Committee on Crime Victims, Crime and Correction, and is awaiting a vote by the full Senate.

As of May 4th, there were 17,447 level 2-3 sex offenders in New York State's Sex Offender Registry, which classifies offenders according to their risk of re-offending: low-risk (Level 1), moderate risk (Level 2) and high-risk (Level 3). Nassau County has 221 Level 2 and Level 3 offenders.

“The numbers are overwhelming,” said Deputy Majority Klein. “It would be near criminal to deny New Yorkers the added convenience of better protecting our children from the kind of unsavory individuals who are, in many cases, our

neighbors.”

Members of the public can currently access this database at local police stations or via a toll-free telephone number. Level 2 and Level 3 offenders are also listed on an Internet subdirectory at the DCJS website. However, the information changes constantly as new offenders are added or existing registrants update their information. E-mail updates would allow New Yorkers to keep tabs on a specific geographic area, such as where they live or where their children attend school, and would save them the time-consuming chore of making regular visits to the subdirectory website.

“Protecting our children and families is the most solemn responsibility of our government,” said Senator Brian X. Foley (D – Blue Point). “I am proud to work with Senator Klein and Senator Johnson to establish an email alert system that notifies families about sex offenders in their communities. The proposed email alert system is critically important because it will provide up-to-date information to residents and help parents safeguard their children from sex offenders.”

“New Yorkers are already able to get notification of traffic delays, storm warnings and other important information from government agencies through the NY-Alert system. The cost to merge this information into NY-Alert and notify New York parents when sex offenders move into their neighborhood is negligible, and the benefit is self-evident. This system will be an important tool for parents to protect their children,” added Assemblyman Rory Lancman (D-Queens), who is carrying the bill in the Assembly.

In addition, with more sex offenders subject to the 12-year-old registration requirements being released from prison every day and an increasing number of sex crimes, like sex trafficking, being added to the list of registrable offenses, the registry is likely to continue its expansion well into the future.