



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James L. Seward

Senate Fights Computer Crimes Against Children

JAMES L. SEWARD

Computers and the Internet are wonderful tools. They enhance and speed our work effort and open all kinds of research and information possibilities. Unfortunately, they are being used for evil purposes -- including preying on children, identity theft, and financial scams, to name a few.

That's just reason why the New York State Senate was in session to approve legislation to combat computer crimes against children. The bill (S.1921) establishes the new felony offense of "computer sex crime" when an offender uses a computer to facilitate and commit a sex crime against a child.

Sexual crimes against children are amongst the most heinous in our community. The Internet is a wonderful tool that has transformed and improved the lives of millions of people. Unfortunately, sexual predators have also made it a dangerous weapon that can be used to victimize innocent children. By passing the senate's legislation bill, we will crack down on pornographers and predators that use computer technology to harm and exploit young children.

Computers are now an integral part of everyday life, but unfortunately, new technology

also makes it easier for innocent people to be victimized. The bill approved by the senate, if approved by the assembly and signed into law by the governor, will make sure that dangerous predators who lurk online to lure victims and commit depraved offenses against children are punished appropriately.

The Internet has altered the types of crimes that can be committed and increased the ease with which individuals can be victimized. Most notably, false identities in cyberspace provide a new medium for dangerous predators to victimize vulnerable individuals, particularly children. By taking on a name and posing as a young friend, criminals can lure children into dangerous circumstances. The results can be devastating.

Under current New York State law, a sex crime against a child includes the commission or attempted commission of sexual conduct, or the use or promotion of a sexual performance involving a child under 17 years old. Our legislation significantly strengthens the law.

The measure builds on other actions taken by the senate during the 2007 session, such as legislation that would require a sentence of life without parole for parents or guardians who kill a child; a bill that would require social services workers to report cases of abuse to the state hotline; and the senate's shocking exposé that more than 1,000 registered sex offenders had gone missing in the state and were unaccounted for. In addition, I support legislation that would require convicted sex offenders listed on the state's registry to wear GPS tracking bracelets so that their whereabouts can be known to police authorities.

Protecting our children in our changing technological times requires that our laws change and adapt so that parents can be confident that when their children go out to play they will return home.

While the assembly did not return to Albany to continue working on issues vital to New Yorkers, I hope that we can secure an agreement on the legislation and get it to the

governor's desk right away. For the sake of our children, we need this bill.

Merry Christmas and happy holidays to all!