

Talking / Writing Points Phrases

Feel-Good Laws/Legislation

One-Size-Fits-All Policies

“Sex Offender” laws cast a wide net...

Knee-Jerk legislation

Emotionally driven legislation

Unintended consequences

Counterproductive

“Lumping all sex offenders together...”

Panic-driven laws

Scarlet Letter

“Sex offender” hysteria

Political Grandstanding

Broad sweeping laws

Witch Hunt

Talking/Writing Points

RESIDENCY RESTRICTIONS:

Residency restrictions serve no purpose but to give some people the illusion of safety.

Housing restrictions appear to be based largely on three myths that are propagated by the media: 1) all sex offenders reoffend; 2) treatment does not work; and 3) the concept of "stranger danger." Research does not support these myths, and in fact, there is research to suggest that exclusionary housing policies may ultimately be counterproductive. (Levenson)

Residency Restrictions diminish housing options for registered offenders, often forcing them farther away from their support systems, their families, employment opportunities, and treatment centers.

Housing restrictions increase isolation, create financial and emotional stress, and lead to decreased stability, all factors which could render someone more likely to reoffend.

Research has concluded that stability and support increase the likelihood of successful reintegration for offenders. Public policies that make it more difficult for offenders to succeed may actually jeopardize public safety.

Another unintended consequence of these laws is that they can permanently separate offenders from their families and children who depend on them, or force entire families to relocate, creating psychological and financial hardship to innocent family members (Levenson).

There is no evidence that sex offender residence restrictions prevent sex crimes or increase public safety.

There is ample scientific evidence that shows residency laws do interfere with the reintegration of sex offenders into society.

Vast amounts of resources are being spent to enforce residency laws with few tangible results.

Residency restrictions are often one -size- fits -all policies.

According to the Iowa county Attorney's Association, the state of Iowa has lost

RESIDENCY RESTRICTION (cont).....

track of more than half of its registered sex offenders since restrictions went into place, making the jobs of probation and parole officers much more difficult and time-consuming.

Residency Restriction laws do not protect the more than 90% of abused children who suffer at the hands of people they know.

Residency restrictions can lead to homelessness and transience, which interfere with effective tracking, monitoring, and close probationary supervision.

Residency restrictions lump all sex offenders together, even though some are child rapists and others may be 18-year-old men who had sex with underage girlfriends.

A 2003 study by the Minnesota Department of Corrections found that sex offenders' proximity to schools or parks was not a factor in recidivism, nor did it affect community safety . In fact, the opposite was found to be true: A sex offender was more likely to travel to another neighborhood in which he could seek victims without being recognized.

I couldn't live in an adult mobile home park because a church was 880 ft away and had a children's class that met once a week. I was forced to move to a motel where right next door to my room was a family with three children—but it qualified under the rule."

Minnesota repeat offenders tended to victimize children who were well known to them, but of the 16 minor victims who were strangers, none of the incidents took place near a school, park, or playground.

The available research shows no relationship whatsoever between where a registered sex offender lives and the pattern of any new sex crime he commits.

Harsh regulations, such as residency restriction, might cause offenders to abscond from registration requirements (Wright 2009).

If every town can design its own rules to keep out all sex offenders, they will either be constantly on the move or will simply drop off the radar entirely.

Even a restriction on residency can't stop someone from walking or driving around town.

Sex offenders are forced into homelessness by rules designed to protect children. Do you feel safer knowing this?

Public Registration

- * The original intent of the “Sex Offender” registry was for law enforcement only, to keep track of those offenders who were deemed truly dangerous.
- * The vast majority of sexual assaults are not committed by strangers. Community notification programs have no effect on the majority of victims.
- * Public notification laws have been found to isolate offenders from normal relationships, undercut their opportunities for housing and employment, and subject offenders to threats and assaults.
- * The unintended consequences of public registration and notification may be to increase the risks of recidivism rather than to protect the community.
- * Public registries drive serious offenders underground, which makes them harder to track and more likely to reoffend.
- * The “sex offender” registry gives parents and communities a false sense of security.
- * There is little evidence that publicly accessible sex offender registries keep people safe.
- * The sex offenders registry is a perfect example of how well-intentioned, but badly-conceived legislation can take a bad situation and make it much worse.

Recidivism Rates

- * On average, recidivism rates for all types of sex offenders are lower than for other offenders.
- * Despite public opinions to the contrary, research shows that sex offenders are among the least likely criminals to re-offend.
- * Research consistently shows that when “sex offenders” do reoffend, they are more likely to commit a nonsexual offense than a sexual one.
- * When offenders are released into communities, it is beneficial to society to provide an infrastructure that facilitates successful re-entry rather than contributes to the obstacles known to increase recidivism (Levenson)
- * Stability and Community support are important factors that serve to reduce the risk of recidivism.
- * Making outcasts of sex offenders often makes them more dangerous

Talking/Writing Points

MISC.

There are thousands of people in Texas (or the United States), who would be designated as sex offenders if the truth about their youth were known.

Emotionally reactive legislation based on fear and anger rather than research, data, and common sense will not be effective in keeping our communities safe.

Just because someone is designated a sex offender under state law does not necessarily mean that the person is a sexually violent predator or a pedophile.

Department of Justice research shows that at least 90 percent of children who are abused are victimized by someone they know and trust.

It is well-established that most sexual abuse victims are molested by someone they know and trust, not by strangers lurking near playgrounds or schools (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1997;2000;2004).

The majority of (93%) of molestations are not committed by strangers but by persons who are known to and trusted by the family or persons within the family itself. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2002)

Some sex offenders should be allowed to petition for release from registration if deemed to pose a low risk to the community AND the offender has successfully completed a sex offender treatment program AND the offender has been living in the community offense-free for at least five years. Such a policy would provide an incentive for law abiding behavior, and would afford rehabilitated offenders improved opportunities for successful community reintegration. (Levenson).

"It is unfortunate when public officials make statements that simply frighten community members without adequate information as a foundation for those statements".

"When public officials quote unsubstantiated facts and use dehumanizing terms, thoughtful dialogue becomes impossible".

"An isolated, unemployed and homeless sex offender clearly presents a greater risk than one who has the support of friends and family, is working full time and has a place to live (Washington State Institute for Public Policy, Doc 15-17, 49-50, 69.)"

"While these types of legislation are easy sops for politicians, they do not provide true security or justice for our communities."

A very large number of individuals who are required to register on the Texas Sex Offender registry have never touched or raped anyone.

There are approximately 60,000 people listed on the Texas Sex Offender registry.

Texas is adding an average of 100 people to the registry each week.

MISC. (cont)

Current laws, as structured, would have labeled many of our grandfathers "sex offenders" for relationships with our grandmothers.

Tax dollars are wasted prosecuting, monitoring, and incarcerating hundreds, possibly thousands of individuals who pose no threat to public safety.

Current laws that label someone a "sex offender" do not differentiate between violent and non-violent offenders.

The aim of all sex offender legislation is to protect the community. However, much of the legislation is based upon flawed assumptions about sex offenders or it is based upon the high-profile cases of stranger abduction and murder of children which are rare occurrences (Wright 2009).

Sound National policy should not be based on rare but tragic occurrences but on the most common experiences supported by empirical data (Wright 2009).

Resources should be used to assist offenders during their pivotal transition back into the community to find long-term housing, employment and services to ensure stability.

The growing "sex offender" list can dilute the amount of attention on the most dangerous offenders.

Other than sex offenders, no offenders in the criminal justice system face national lifetime registries.

Current laws smother hope of ever reintegrating into society, and not conducive to self-improvement.

Broad sweeping laws that treat all offenders the same waste resources and lives.
