

May 21, 2009

From: Jane Keller
2110 Rockford Place
Dallas, Texas 75555
830-333-7555

Dear Senator Fraser,

As a constituent of district 24 and a resident of Brown County, I am deeply concerned about current Texas sex offender laws. My concern is for the life-long punishment my husband David, and those who love him, will endure. David faces a lifetime sentence of restrictions, ridicule and instability having to register as a sex offender for having consensual sex with his girlfriend when they were teenagers. He had just turned 18 years old two weeks before, and his girlfriend was about to turn 15 years old. They were at a party one night and her grandmother walked in on them. He was placed on probation and ended up spending three and a half years in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice system. He has served his time, and since being released, he has been unable to find work. My husband is a good man, and all he wishes to do is support our family.

David poses no threat to children, or society in general, yet he is required to be on the exact same registry as those individuals who are dangerous, violent offenders. Current laws offer no distinction between offenders.

Should my husband (and our family) be faced with a lifetime of pain because the 'state' decided he needed to be punished indefinitely for having consensual teenage sex? Does the punishment fit the crime? And now, for the rest of his life, David will be listed on the public sex offender registry and fall under the same category as dangerous pedophiles; this is not fair to him or to our family. The Texas Sex Offender registry was intended to ensure public safety. It is now destroying lives. Please help our family to one day live a normal, peaceful life by proposing or supporting legislation that will differentiate between those who are truly dangerous and those who are not. May God bless you and your work.

Respectfully,

Dear Senator Watson,

If you're reading this, there might actually be a little hope for me and others who are in my situation. I am writing concerning the most blatant, government-sanctioned civil rights violation that grows uglier every single day in Texas and throughout the United States.

I am required to register on the Texas Sex Offender Registry for the rest of my life due to a one time lapse of judgment. Please imagine how I must feel. My "punishments" continue to grow exponentially. My wife needs to stop worrying that someone will take pleasure in bringing me harm or that our finances will just continue to spiral downward until we are the family that lives under the bridge. My kids need to stop worrying that their friends will find their dad on the public registry, and won't be allowed to associate.

The sex offender registry is considered "administrative," not punitive. I've got to say, that's news to me. I would think that the annual check-in with the city police department, the annual renewal of my drivers license, the fact that I cant have a porch light on during Halloween, the fact that I cant get a job, the fact that I cannot move without informing the police, the fact that anyone in the world can look me up and find out where I live.....it all feels rather punitive to me and there is more than you could ever dream.

Sex offender registration is wrong for someone who commit's a crime, but realizes his or her mistake, and wants to correct it and move on. Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg wrote in dissent to a decision authorizing continued publication of the sex offender registration that "However plain it may be that a former sex offender currently poses no threat of recidivism, he will remain subject to long-term monitoring and inescapable humiliation."

Will you help us, or turn the other way?

With a small flicker of hope,

Todd Anthony Carter

(If you need my address, just search the Texas Sex Offender registry. It's right there for everyone to find.)

From: R.W. Harrington
629 Grove Park
Dallas, Texas 75555
830-777-9090

Dear Representative Alonzo,

For many years, I have admired your dedication and hard work on behalf of the citizens of District 104. I currently reside in Dallas and am proud to be represented by one of the most qualified, compassionate, and common sense legislators. I am writing with hopes of a better tomorrow. A better tomorrow for my wife, my children, those you love me, and of course for myself. As a person who is required to register as a "sex offender", life has been stressful and at some points, hopeless. I am a hard worker, yet cannot find a job. I am highly qualified for many jobs but cannot find an employer who would want their business listed on the registry under "place of employment." My family has been forced to move three times last year. It seems as if apartment complexes fear the registry as well. I often hear the phrase "We must protect the children." I wonder if anyone ever considers the children of "sex offenders." They are certainly not protected from the harassment and ridicule they endure from their classmates. They are certainly not protected when we are forced to pull them out of one school in order to find another where their "secret" may be safe for a time.

There are thousands of families, just like ours, throughout Texas. We have all been thrown into this huge fishbowl and are finding it ever so hard to swim.

Current laws, as structured, are not keeping anyone safer. They are financially and emotionally destroying families. Good families, good people, who just wish to become productive members of society. My offense was not deviant nor dangerous. However, due to the fact that my name and information is listed on the Texas Sex Offender registry, my home and my car have been egged, employers will not hire me, neighbors fear me, and most apartment complexes wont rent to me.

How many other crimes-including heinous crimes-require the perpetrator's name, address, picture, place of employment, and even shoe size be put on a list that is made available to the public and searchable on the internet? Are drunk drivers required to place large bumper stickers on their vehicles so that we can avoid them on the highway, "just in case?" Are tax evaders required to check in with the IRS every year, in person, along with all the other tax evaders? Are people convicted of manslaughter required to post signs in their yard to warn the neighbors? No other crime warrants the kind of constant vigilante justice that "sex offender" registration provokes.

Why did I write to you? Because I still have hope. Hope that someone will one day stand up and speak for common sense legislation. I hope that someone will be you. Please help our family and other families who wish to live their lives in peace. Thank you for your consideration.

With Respect,

*From: Donald Baker
202 East Hampshire Blvd.
Houston, Texas 78888
977-580-6980*

Dear Governor Perry,

As a native Texan and supporter of all who strive to ensure a safe and secure Texas, I appreciate your dedication to the citizens of our great state. As Texas legislators begin the difficult task of working toward fair and balanced laws, I find it important to address the current "sex offender" laws.

Unfortunately, the label of "registered sex offender" has become a catch all phrase that has reached out and devastated entire families who's loved one has committed an offense which was neither dangerous nor violent. Hundreds of adults and juveniles, who pose no threat to public safety, have been needlessly labeled for life. In fact, a recent article from the Justice Policy Institute, Registering Harm, states: "In Texas, the number of registerable crimes has grown from four to twenty since the enactment of the first registration laws in 1991, with approximately 100 new people added to the registry each week".

As Texas police departments continue to struggle with an ever-growing list of offenders, monitoring of those who are truly dangerous has become more and more difficult. As a result, we, as citizens, are now less safe. It is my hope that the Governor's office will support common sense laws which will truly ensure public safety. Laws that will allow for differentiation between those offenders who are dangerous and those who are not.

May God lead you in your work toward embracing a more reasonable and realistic approach to current "sex offender" laws. Thank you for your time and dedication to the citizens of Texas.

Respectfully,