

House Republican Press Release

June 2, 2007
Press Office: 860-240-8700

HOUSE PASSES LAW TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM SEXUAL PREDATORS



Legislation Co-Authored by Rep. O'Neill Heads To Governor Rell For Final Approval

HARTFORD – Legislation co-authored by State Rep. Arthur J. O'Neill, R-Southbury, that will impose strict penalties on sexual predators was approved by the House of Representatives during a special Saturday session today. Senate Bill 1458, An Act Concerning Jessica's Law, now moves to Governor M. Jodi Rell for final approval.

Rep. O'Neill helped craft the legislation as Ranking Member (House Republican Leader) of the Legislature's Judiciary Committee. Jessica's Law is named for Jessica Lunsford, a nine-year-old Florida girl who was abducted and killed in February of 2005 by a convicted sex offender. The legislation imposes severe mandatory minimum prison sentences for first and second offenses involving juveniles and will serve as an effective deterrent against committing such crimes, said Rep. O'Neill.

"This legislation is an important step toward protecting children in Connecticut from sexual predators," said Rep. O'Neill. "We've come a long way since the Governor proposed her version of Jessica's Law. The bill is the product of both political parties, both chambers and the Legislative and Executive Branches of Government."

Under SB 1458, the first conviction for sexual assault of a minor under age 13 in which the victim is kidnapped, restrained, stalked, involves violence, physical injury or more than 1 victim would carry a 25 year mandatory minimum sentence. Conviction for a second offense would result in a 50 year mandatory minimum sentence.

The legislation would also strengthen penalties related to child pornography. Specifically, it would establish a five year mandatory minimum for convictions of importing child porn with intent to promote or possessing 50 or more visual depictions of child pornography. It would also establish a mandatory minimum sentence of two years for convictions of possessing 20 or more visual depictions of child pornography and a mandatory minimum sentence of 1 year for convictions of possessing fewer than 20 visual depictions of child pornography.