

House Republican Press Release

April 3, 2007

Press Office: 860-240-8700

Sawyer & House Republicans Promote Child Safety from School Yard to Cyber Space



HARTFORD- Connecticut children will have more secure schools and greater protection from predators roaming the streets and cyber space under legislative proposals presented by House Republicans today.

At a press conference this afternoon, House Republican Leader Lawrence Cafero, Jr. of Norwalk said child safety enhancement is a central goal of the Republican caucus. “Parents rightfully expect society to do everything it can to protect their children from predatory abusers from the moment they get on the school bus in the morning to when they are browsing cyber space at home,” Cafero said. “We have the technology to make our kids safer, we just need to act on common sense proposals that we want for our children.”

Cafero pointed out that the State of Connecticut’s online Sex Offender Registry has a number of critical shortcomings, making it a less useful resource for concerned parents and citizens. In many instances, photos of registered offenders were not included. Helpful descriptions of the nature of the offense committed requiring registration are not generally available.

“As a state legislator, a former board of education member, but most of all a mother, I know that concerned parents ought to have the proper resources available to keep them informed of potential threats to their children,” said Representative Pam Sawyer (R-Bolton), House Republican Whip. “When a registered sex offender moves into a community, parents need to have accurate and clear images available that show the offender’s features clearly and identifiably, and we need to know what kinds of things an offender has done that have warranted his conviction. Democrats talked about doing this last year, yet nothing was done. Parents have a right to know.”

The package of bills House Republicans offered today would:

- Make schools safer by beefing up security and imposing single entrances for all buildings;
- Double penalties for crimes in designated Child Safety Zones;
- Require school contractors to submit lists of employees for review by local school boards. Only teachers and janitors are currently reviewed;

- Post the “docket” of people convicted of sexual offenses and make it available via the internet, requiring updated compliance with offenders’ addresses and photographs;
- Expand the state’s Child Identity System, including giving parents more opportunities to provide local law enforcement agencies critical information about their children;
- Work with Internet providers and other private sector companies to make the web more secure for young people.

Sawyer noted that creating a safety zone around schools and playgrounds is sensible, as predators typically lurk in these areas. “We have an obligation to make these areas more safe and secure, giving parents a greater peace of mind,” said Sawyer. “These are very simple proposals that add critical protections, and the legislature should enact every one of them.”

This session of the Connecticut General Assembly is scheduled to end at midnight, June 6th, 2007.