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**May 23, 2006**

**MADIGAN, WALLER ANNOUNCE ADDITIONAL SAFEGUARDS TO  
KEEP SEXUAL PREDATORS CONFINED; HANSON CASE CITED AS  
EXAMPLE**

Waukegan – Following last year’s vicious rape and attempted murder of an 18-year-old jogger on a bike path in Lake County, Attorney General Lisa Madigan and Lake County State’s Attorney Michael Waller today announced additional safeguards to keep dangerous sexual predators confined and communities safe.

The new safeguards are contained in legislation, SB 2873, which both chambers of the General Assembly passed unanimously. The legislation was sponsored State Sen. Don Harmon ( D-Oak Park) and State Rep. Careen Gordon (D-Morris). Harmon and other lawmakers were expected to join Madigan and Waller at an afternoon news conference.

The legislation strengthens the state’s Sexually Violent Persons (SVP) Act to ensure that the worst of the worst sex offenders – those offenders whom authorities believe will rape again – are confined indefinitely. Illinois is one of 16 states that has an SVP program, which can result in the civil commitment of an offender if he is deemed sexually violent upon his parole from the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC). In Christopher Hanson’s case, flaws in the program allowed him to slip through the cracks.

Hanson was last released from IDOC custody on October 8, 2004. A Lake County jury last week convicted Hanson of aggravated criminal sexual assault, attempted murder and aggravated kidnapping.

“ Illinois’ Sexually Violent Persons Act and the evaluation by the IDOC is the closest thing we have to a crystal ball when it comes to determining whether an offender will attack again,” Madigan said. “This process is designed to identify those offenders for whom it is substantially probable that they will engage in future acts of sexual violence and to keep them out of society for as long as they remain a danger.”

Madigan continued, “We must do everything we can to make this process airtight. When it comes to the safety of women and children of Illinois, we must do everything possible to eliminate errors. I commend State’s Attorney Waller and his staff for their commitment to prosecuting these dangerous offenders.”

“Last week’s jury verdict insures that Christopher Hanson will never attack another woman, and with the Attorney General’s leadership, the recent legislative changes make it much less likely that in the future sexual predators will be freed to victimize other women,” Waller said.

SB 2873, which is awaiting the Governor’s signature, tightens the SVP program by requiring IDOC to notify the convicting state’s attorney’s office six months prior to consideration of a sex offender for SVP commitment. Madigan and Waller said this is critical because the state’s attorneys often are more aware of an offender’s violent past than IDOC and this provision will involve them more closely in the process.

Second, the legislation clarifies the ongoing eligibility of sex offenders such as Hanson for indefinite commitment. In the past, confusion has arisen over whether certain offenders remain eligible for such confinement.

Third, the legislation amends the SVP Act to ensure that no sex offender referred for commitment as an SVP should be released without a period of intensive supervision. In the past, the clock started ticking on a sex offender’s parole when he was civilly committed. Thus, when he was released, parole was over and no supervision ensued. SB 2873 would ensure that an SVP’s parole starts when he is released from SVP confinement, not when he is referred for commitment.

“SB 2873 adds crucial protections against sexual predators. The bill responds to the rare but outrageous possibility -- which occurred in Lake County -- that a sex offender is mis-classified due to a technicality. Confusion over legal filing requirements shouldn’t put our children and families at risk,” Harmon said.

“This new law strengthens the reporting requirements and increases the eligibility factors for a person who can be civilly committed under the Sexually Violent Persons Act,” Gordon said. “It is another tool for law enforcement and an additional layer of safety for our communities.”

To be committed under the Sexually Violent Persons Commitment Act, a person must have been convicted of a sexually violent offense and exhibit a mental disorder. Additionally, prosecutors must prove that the offender is substantially likely to commit future acts of sexual violence if released from custody. Once committed to the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS), offenders are reevaluated on a regular basis to determine if they continue to meet the criteria for commitment as a sexually violent person.

“I have spoken with survivors and advocates from across Illinois and there is a common theme in all our discussions – the desire to improve the system to prevent another woman or child from being assaulted,” Madigan said. “This is why we are here today. To honor and acknowledge the courage and strength of victims from across Illinois and to let them know, that as a result of our examination of the SVP process, we have introduced legislation to help keep them safe.”