



For Immediate Release
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**MADIGAN ANNOUNCES NEW EFFORTS TO PROMOTE INTERNET
SAFETY EDUCATION FOR SCHOOL CHILDREN**

***CHICAGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CHILD ADVOCATES JOIN TO
PROMOTE LEGISLATION AND EDUCATION VIDEOS***

Chicago – Joined by educators from Chicago Public Schools (CPS), CPS Board President Rufus Williams and area lawmakers, Attorney General Lisa Madigan today unveiled new and concentrated measures designed to help protect today's school children from threats not known to school kids of just a few years ago: online predators and other criminals that use the Internet to perpetrate crimes against children.

At a morning news conference in the library and computer lab at Chicago's Drummond Elementary School, Madigan announced two important tools that will help parents and educators monitor how children use the Internet. Senate Bill 1472 calls on schools to provide yearly Internet safety education to students in grades K through 12. In addition, Madigan announced that her office will coordinate the distribution to schools throughout the state educational videos that promote Internet safety.

"The Internet is increasingly accessible right here at school and right there at home," Madigan said. "While kids are very computer savvy, unfortunately many of us who are parents and teachers are sometimes not as prepared as we should be to warn children about Internet threats."

Introduced into the General Assembly last month, SB 1472, the Internet Safety Education Act, sponsored by Sen. Dan Kotowski and Rep. David Miller, encourages Illinois schools to adopt an age-appropriate Internet safety curriculum. Intended to serve as a tool to assist educators, SB 1472 identifies several key topics for instruction including safe and responsible use of the Internet, online predators, identity theft, cyber-bullying and harassment, and illegal downloading.

"The Act will inform and protect students from inappropriate or illegal communications and solicitation," Sen. Kotowski said. "It is important that we adapt with our growing technology to keep our kids and families out of harm's way."

"As a father of young children who already are utilizing computers and the Internet, I think it is very important for schools to educate children on the importance of Internet safety," said Rep. Miller.

Madigan also announced today during her visit to Drummond Elementary's Montessori program that her office will coordinate the distribution of *Think Before You Post*, a new public service advertising (PSA) campaign created by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) and the U.S. Department of Justice in cooperation with the Ad Council. The PSAs are designed to raise awareness about the prevalence of online sexual exploitation and to help parents, guardians and teens better protect themselves from online predators.

Approximately 34 percent of children ages 10 to 17 post their real names, telephone numbers, home addresses or the names of their schools online where anyone could see, according to a recent study conducted by University of New Hampshire researchers for NCMEC.

"We believe in the power of this PSA campaign to have an impact on youth nationwide and are pleased to partner with Attorney General Madigan and the Chicago Public Schools to put this information in the hands of the children and teens in Chicago," said Ernie Allen, President and CEO of NCMEC. "By reminding youth to *Think Before You Post*, we can reach the more than one-third who are putting themselves at risk online."

"At Chicago Public Schools, we are fighting daily to protect our students against Internet predators," said CPS Board President Williams. "The legislation proposed by Sen. Kotowski is key in winning this fight because it focuses on educating our children."

Williams continued, "If we can teach students how to recognize the dangers of the Internet, they can help to protect themselves."

Madigan commended Superintendent Arne Duncan and the Chicago Public Schools for partnering with her office in making the *Think Before You Post* PSA available to over 500 grammar and high schools throughout the city of Chicago.

"In addition to schools here in Chicago, our office is working with school organizations throughout the state to ensure that as many children as possible see its message and learn from it," Madigan said.

Madigan used the occasion to stress the ever-changing virtual world and how online predators have new mediums to reach potential victims and perpetrate crimes against children.

- According to a 2005 report by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, 87 percent of teens between the ages of 12 and 17 are online.
- In 2006, 55 percent of teens reported use of social networking website of which 48 percent reported visiting such websites at least daily.
- According to NCMEC, approximately 13 percent of youth received a sexual solicitation or approach over the Internet within the preceding year.

"These are only some of the statistics that should give adults pause," Madigan said. "I am convinced however that vigilant parents, the tireless work of organizations like NCMEC, educators and lawmakers will make a difference in

helping kids steer clear of online predators as they travel the information highway.”

Since taking office as Attorney General in 2003, Madigan has been committed to protecting Illinois families when surfing the Internet. Madigan’s office provides online safety tips and presentations for children, teenagers and parents as well as other consumer-related information on protecting yourself online.

For more information, click on:

<http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/children/safetytips.html>

The Attorney General’s High Tech Crimes Bureau and the Illinois Internet Child Exploitation Task Force (ICAC) are other programs that assist her office and local law enforcement in fighting against online child exploitation. More information can be located at:

http://www.illinoisattorneygeneral.gov/children/child_hitech.html

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