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ATTORNEY GENERAL MADIGAN OBTAINS ADDITIONAL IDENTITIES OF SEX OFFENDERS ON MYSPACE

Chicago –Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced that MySpace has provided her office with identifying information from an additional 789 MySpace profiles that appear to belong to registered sex offenders in Illinois.

Madigan requested the information from MySpace as part of an ongoing effort to prevent sex offenders from using the popular social-networking Web site to communicate online with children. The Attorney General's office is now reviewing the information from MySpace to determine whether the sex offenders have violated any terms of their parole or probation.

"I am very concerned that sex offenders are using popular Internet sites, like MySpace, to gain access to children," Madigan said. "We must take every possible step to make it clear to sex offenders that they cannot hide in cyberspace and continue to target our children."

MySpace is a popular social-networking Web site where registered members can search and communicate with other members. Members are able to create personal profiles to display pictures and other information, while visitors can post commentary or use the site to communicate with them directly in real-time. Social-networking sites have exploded in popularity over the last several years, and MySpace has enjoyed unparalleled success, hosting nearly 95 million unique visitors in March 2007.

In late May, in response to a subpoena issued by Madigan's office, MySpace disclosed and deleted 844 profiles that had been created by registered Illinois sex offenders. The information obtained from MySpace this week brings the total number of disclosed and deleted MySpace profiles registered to Illinois sex offenders to 1,633.

The initial MySpace disclosure proved to be a useful tool for enforcing sex offender registration laws and parole restrictions. The Attorney General's analysis of the initial 844 profiles revealed 11 sex offenders who had failed to comply with mandatory registration requirements. In addition, the list exposed 22 sex offenders subject to parole restrictions. Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) officials reported that 10 parolees were returned to prison for parole violations based on the initial MySpace disclosures in May. In some cases, the Attorney General's investigators used MySpace profile user names and email addresses in connection with ongoing investigations to locate sex

offenders who were non-compliant with the Illinois Sex Offender Registration Act.

Early analysis of the new data reveals that many of the sex offenders are frequent visitors to MySpace. In May and June, the identified offenders accessed their profile to use MySpace on 113,731 separate occasions. In one case, a single offender accessed his MySpace profile on 813 occasions from February 14, 2007 to April 8, 2007 – 679 times in March alone. Several other offenders demonstrated similar behavior.

Madigan's office is now reviewing the latest disclosure to confirm its accuracy, determine the sex offender registration compliance status of the identified offenders, and confirm which offenders are serving terms or parole and probation. As soon as the review is complete, Madigan will share the information with IDOC and probation departments across the state to determine whether offenders' use of MySpace violates conditions of their parole or probation.

"The disclosure of this information by MySpace is an important step that allows us to work with Web sites to protect children online," said Madigan. "However, it's important to know that MySpace is only identifying the offenders who used their real names or other identifying information. Parents and guardians must keep in mind that sex offenders can use an alias or misrepresent their age online to avoid detection. We must continue to educate children on safe Internet use, and find new ways to keep predators from accessing our children."

Earlier this year, Madigan joined attorneys general from 52 states and territories to urge MySpace to determine the extent of sex offenders' use of their network. In response, MySpace contracted with Sentinel Tech Holdings to cross reference its membership database with the names of registered sex offenders. MySpace informed the attorneys general that it had identified and deleted thousands of registered sex offenders from its website, but preserved the offenders' identifying information. Madigan subpoenaed that information from MySpace.

MySpace has agreed that it will continue to search its site for registered sex offenders and will disclose to attorneys general the names, dates of birth, and email and Internet protocol (IP) addresses of any sex offenders identified on its site.

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