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MADIGAN: LEGISLATURE STRENGTHENS SENTENCING FOR CHILD PORNOGRAPHY OFFENDERS WITH UNANIMOUS VOTE

Measure to Protect Child Victims Moves to Governor's Desk

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today applauded the General Assembly's unanimous vote in support of legislation that will help strengthen prosecutors' efforts to protect children from pornographers, following House Bill 2647's passage today on concurrence in the House.

The legislation clarifies current Illinois law to allow prosecuting attorneys to charge suspects for each individual item of alleged child pornography in their possession. The bill would be in line with other statutes, such as the controlled substances laws, that allow for multiple convictions for "single and separate" violations. The House originally unanimously passed the measure in early April. The Senate then unanimously passed the bill with an amendment, sending it back to the House for concurrence today.

"Child pornography is not a victimless crime. Every time an image of an infant or a toddler being raped is viewed, it perpetuates the heinous crime against these innocent victims. To protect these children, we must ensure law enforcement has the strongest tools at its disposal to put these offenders behind bars for years," Madigan said.

"By clarifying this aspect of the law, we are sending a clear message to the people who possess and distribute child pornography," said Senate sponsor John Mulroe (D-Chicago). "We've cut out any loopholes that would give a perpetrator any advantage, letting them know that even one image is too many."

Madigan also stressed the importance of HB 2647 in light of the consecutive sentencing model that her office helped draft and worked with the legislature to enact last year. Under that model, courts must impose mandatory consecutive, rather than concurrent, sentences for child pornography-related offenses.

"This clarification in the law will provide prosecutors another tool as they work to crack down on dangerous predators in possession of child pornography," said Rep. McAsey (D-Romeoville), who sponsored the measure in the House. "I appreciate the opportunity to work with Attorney General Madigan and remain committed to strengthening Illinois law to protect our children from victimization."

In addition to her legislative efforts to combat child pornography, Madigan leads "Operation Glass House," an ongoing statewide initiative to apprehend the most active child pornography traders in Illinois. In the first year of Operation Glass House, Madigan's investigations revealed a disturbing trend of offenders trading extremely violent videos of young children being raped. As a result, Operation Glass House has focused on apprehending offenders who are seen trading and watching extremely violent videos involving children, including infants and toddlers.

Madigan's office, with a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, also runs the Illinois Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) task force, which investigates child exploitation crimes and trains law enforcement agencies. Since 2006, Madigan's ICAC task force has been involved in 558 arrests of sexual predators. The task force has also provided Internet safety training and education to nearly 290,000 parents, teachers and students and 16,000 law enforcement professionals. Currently, 183 local law enforcement agencies are affiliated with the Illinois ICAC.

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