

“Pedophile-free zones not feel-good law”

Editorial By Alan Robinson, *December 2005*

Your recent editorial about “pedophile-free zones” brings to our attention an issue that may be debated on constitutional, but not functional, grounds.

First of all, it is not true with this type of offender that “like any criminal activity, the person committing an offense is more likely to do so in a neighborhood where he is unknown.”

A recent study showed that 65 percent of these offenders abduct children within 200 feet from the front door of their house, and 80 percent within a quarter-mile of their residence. These individuals are usually not from outside a child’s neighborhood, but rather a neighbor.

You only need to look so far as the Megan Kanda case to discover that she was abducted, murdered and sexually assaulted by Jesse Timmendequas (who now sits on New Jersey’s death row), a neighbor who lived across the street from her with two other convicted sex offenders.

The risk to the preferential pedophile by venturing into a neighborhood where he is not known is an unacceptable one. It increases his likelihood of being reported to the police when his vehicle or his presence around children is deemed suspicious.

The more likely scenario we see is that he moves into a neighborhood where there are a lot of children and becomes part of the “fabric” of that targeted neighborhood.

This is an offender who walks his dog, rides his bike, jogs, shoots baskets, etc.

He is known to local children and is seen by their parents everyday. His behavior isn’t seen as suspicious for the very reasons you state in your article- most parents believe that the pedophile operates in a neighborhood other than the one in which he lives.

You should also know that the tier system that is used to rank sex offenders is broken.

A Tier III offender (by definition, high risk for re-offending) can plea-bargain his ranking to a Tier II (moderate risk) if he can demonstrate that he has taken drug or alcohol rehabilitation, undergone counseling, etc, to reduce his risk of re-offending. Pedophilia, is not affected by these attempts; only the reduced ranking. A pedophile with this psychosexual disorder does not have an on/off switch.

Attempts to restrict the residential opportunities available to these offenders in an effort to protect our children are laudable.

If it later is deemed to be unconstitutional, so be it, but it shouldn’t be eliminated as a tool to protect our children because it is depicted as a “feel-good” law. It is no such thing. These individuals offend at a rate that would make your head spin, and since most children don’t report the abuse, and the statute of limitations in many states is only seven years, prosecutors are prohibited from indicting them.

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