

Vice-chair interviewed for NC State Fair piece; heavily edited

written by admin | October 13, 2017



By Michael Hyland . . . RALEIGH, N.C. (WNCN) – With the North Carolina State Fair underway, law enforcement officers are aiming to keep sex offenders off the premises.

“They put a perimeter around the fairgrounds, a quarter of a mile. And, when a person comes through that perimeter with an ankle bracelet on or whatever they have, it sets off an alarm,” said Wake County Sheriff Donnie Harrison.

A new law took effect last year barring many of the state’s roughly 17,000 registered sex offenders from being on the fairgrounds during the State Fair.

“We just feel like it’s patently unfair,” said Robin Vanderwall, who is a registered sex offender in Wake County and with the organization North Carolinians for Rational Sexual Offense Laws.

He said the law unfairly targets some people who've served their criminal sentences and fulfilled their probation obligations. His group is seeking to have the law overturned.

"We understand people's concern for safety," he said. "We believe there's probably a better solution to addressing that concern."

Read the full article by [clicking here](#).

Robin's comments:

While I can't say I'm terribly disappointed by the final news story, I am disheartened that most of what I felt were the very best clips didn't make it into the cut. For example, when asked what I believe people most misunderstood about registered citizens in North Carolina, I pointed to low recidivism rates and made glowing claims about the more recent scientific data that backs that up. When asked why I thought it was unfair that registered citizens couldn't attend the fair, I responded that there would be thousands of ex-felons at the fair on opening day and throughout the following week, but that only one particular sub-class of citizens are categorically denied admission. I suggested that the more appropriate concern of law enforcement regarding the state fair was the potential for a domestic terrorism incident much like what we witnessed in Las Vegas.

I wrote Michael, the reporter, an email after the story aired and politely chided him for allowing Sheriff Harrison to paint the image that all sex offenders are wearing ankle bracelets when the reality is that very few individuals in North Carolina actually do. The policy restricting access by individuals wearing ankle bracelets has been in place for quite a long time and there is nothing about a complete ban on all registered citizens that changes it or even improves law enforcement's capacity to monitor anyone who is NOT wearing an ankle bracelet. Sheriff Harrison merely took

advantage of the interview to perpetuate the myth that all sex offenders are equally—and highly—dangerous to the public. We know that is certainly not the case.

It's important to note that this press opportunity was not solicited by NARSOL or NCRSOL. Instead, Michael reached out to NARSOL and was referred to me as someone local enough to do an on-air interview.