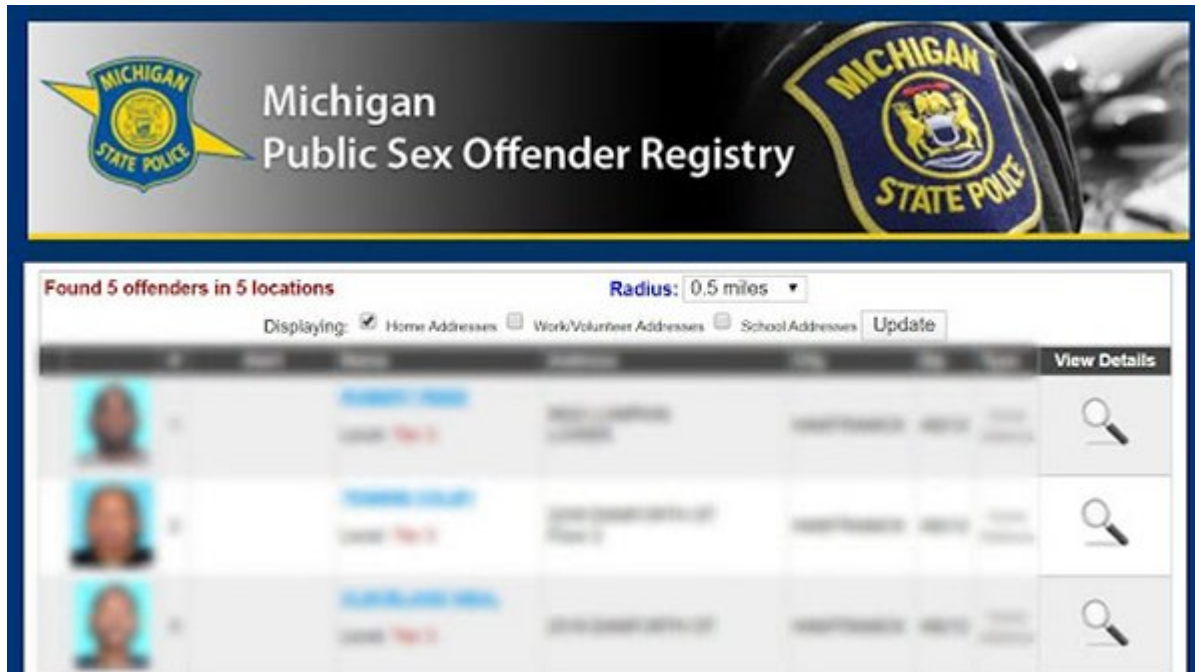


# Michigan SORA changes signed into law

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By [Beth LaBlanc](#) . . .

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer on Tuesday signed a bill that would eliminate school safety zones and certain appearance requirements in Michigan's Sex Offender Registration Act.

The changes, made to comply with federal court orders that called the current law unenforceable, were among 80 bills passed by the Legislature during its lame duck session and signed by Whitmer on Tuesday.

The bill made several tweaks to the law, with the largest being the elimination of school safety zones, which prohibit registered sex offenders from living within 1,000 feet of schools.

The changes also would eliminate mandates requiring immediate in-person appearances to update changes to offenders' email addresses, street addresses or vehicle information. The new law lengthens the time period for reporting those changes and

allows state police to create a more manageable system for reporting.

The legislation requires offenders to be removed from the registry if their crime had been expunged or if the individual was sentenced under the Holmes Youthful Trainee Act.

“We needed to find a way to rework it if we wanted a registry at all,” bill sponsor Rep. Jim Lower, R-Eureka Township, said upon the bill’s House passage earlier this month.

The U.S. 6th Circuit Court of appeals ruled several years ago that school zone bans and reporting requirements enacted after the initial law was passed amounted to unconstitutionally retroactive punishment. They also were “very burdensome” to the point that they resembled “the ancient punishment of banishment,” the court said.

In 2019, Detroit U.S. District Judge Robert Cleland ordered the Legislature to change the law or lose it altogether since the state essentially would be maintaining a legally unenforceable law.

If they didn’t change the law by March 20, Cleland said in February, the act would no longer be enforceable against those who offended before 2011, when the immediate reporting requirements were added. The school safety zone language was added in 2006.

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