

Louisiana prepared to battle over “sex offender” driver’s licenses

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By [Adam Liptak](#) . . . A Louisiana law required people convicted of sex crimes to use driver’s licenses on which the words “sex offender” would appear in big capital orange letters under their photographs.

That could make everyday encounters – with bank tellers, hotel clerks, supermarket cashiers, election officials, airport security officers and prospective employers – humiliating. Critics called the notation a modern-day scarlet letter. State officials said it kept the public safe from predators.

The Louisiana Supreme Court [struck down the law](#) last year, saying it violated the First Amendment. State officials have asked the U.S. Supreme Court to hear the case, one that presents important questions about public policy and First Amendment doctrine.

Sex offenders are subject to countless restrictions under

state and federal laws, notably by having to list their addresses on public registries available on the internet. In a [petition seeking Supreme Court review](#), state officials said that was not enough and that the special IDs provided an extra measure of security.

“Under the Louisiana Supreme Court’s decision, the public will lack an essential tool for identifying sex offenders in the community,” the state’s petition said. “Online registries are insufficient to protect the state’s interests because people can easily give a false name and deny their status. During storms and other emergencies, power outages and interrupted internet connections may make it impossible to check the online registry.”

The petition gave examples of why state ID cards should bear the notation, some more compelling than others. “People trick-or-treating on Halloween may need a quick way to verify that their children are safe from predators,” the brief said, though asking to see ID before accepting candy is not commonplace.

[*Read the remainder of the piece here.*](#)