

For 2021, Patch's "red-dot" maps were (almost) gone; thank you, Patch!

written by Sandy | November 3, 2021



By Sandy . . . It started around 2010, this conflation of Halloween and danger to children from those on the sexual offense registry. [Based on a simple Google search in an informal study](#), there were zero articles on that subject up to 2002, when there was one. There was also one in 2004. Each year more were added; by 2010 there were forty, in 2012 a hundred, and in 2014 a hundred and seventy-seven.

That is when **Patch** joined in. One state, Illinois, featured a few of what came to be known as "red-dot" maps in 2013, but by 2015 they were on a roll with a dozen or more states printing their **Patch** "Halloween Sex Offender Safety Maps" with sub-headings like, "Find out which houses to avoid," and "Check this map before your kids go out trick or treating."

They had our attention.

A group spearheaded by our Connecticut affiliate organization

One Standard of Justice and our Illinois affiliate group Illinois Voices developed a plan for a complex email campaign. Advocates across the nation participated, we divided up territory, and in 2016 every **Patch** writer or editor that published a Halloween Safety Map received one or more emails from us, emails stating some factual information and asking them to include it in their articles.

We had their attention. The years following saw battles, skirmishes, and outright wars.

2017 was a year of much give and take. We wrote an [open letter of protest to Patch](#), and to our great surprise they published it, albeit under the title, "Sex Offender Advocates Object to Local Mapping of Registered Sex Criminals." One of their chief editors, Dennis Robaugh, retaliated with a piece entitled, "['Then I See The Delight In Your Eyes Turn To Fear'](#) " with a subtitle, "This is why Patch publishes local sex offender maps." It is the story of Lisa French, a young Wisconsin girl who was raped and murdered on Halloween by a neighbor in 1973, and virtually every Patch in the country ran the two together in 2017 and for several years after. [Publication of my response to his Lisa French piece](#) was declined by **Patch**.

The next couple of years we focused on emailing **Patch** editors throughout the U.S., on op-eds, on press releases, and on registered mail sent to Patch headquarters.

2020 was our **pièce de résistance**. Partnered with One Standard of Justice, NARSOL [produced and distributed a statement](#) solidifying all the scientific evidence available negating any increased risk to children at Halloween from those on a sexual offense registry. It was signed on to by well over a hundred organizations and individuals, many prestigious academics, researchers, and others; and by all of NARSOL's affiliates, contacts, and advocates, a total of over 200 signatures.

Whether it was this alone, whether an accumulation of

everything, or whether something else altogether, we do not know. Nor do we know if this is permanent or temporary. What we do know is that for Halloween 2021 and the weeks leading up to it, as far as we are able to determine and except for one state, no “red-dot” maps appeared in **Patch** articles. No Halloween safety maps were published pointing out where registered persons lived. No warnings were given to parents regarding those on the registry by **Patch** writers or editors.

Except for one state.

Illinois continued. **Patches** in that state published their maps and issued their warnings, and then many of them also published some of the facts and even a statement from ATSA giving more facts.

The first state to start this is the last state to give it up.

So **Patch**, we thank you. We appreciate what you have done – or rather, not done. We sincerely hope that this continues and that you will be able to get Illinois on board.

Unlimited thanks and appreciation also go every advocate, every person who worked on this, and especially to Connecticut’s One Standard of Justice for being dedicated to this from beginning to – I won’t say end because we don’t know if it is.

But we have hopes.