

How the media fans the flames of hatred for people on sex offense registries

written by Sandy | January 11, 2022



By Sandy . . . Fox News, a self-proclaimed conservative media outlet, had distributed [this story](#) out of Austin, Texas. While its overt message is that “defunding the police” puts the public in danger, the very strong subtext is that anyone with a sexual crime conviction is evil, dangerous, and only held in check from constant reoffense by a strong, diligent police department.

“Defunding the police” is a term utilized not by those who call for more responsible managing of our tax coffers but as a weapon intended to stir the flames of dissent and anger. In this one, short article, starting with its inclusion in the title, the phrase is used eight times. Those who are blamed for “defunding the police” want to do no such thing. They want, rather, that money allotted to law enforcement be used in evidence-based initiatives shown to be required for public safety.

Running police sting operations are not among these. Nor is constant monitoring of approximately 90% of any jurisdiction's sexual offense registry. Those who have not reoffended would be as well left alone, [reoffending at an average rate of approximately 5%](#), and, even if some are non-compliant with a few of the many and onerous rules and regulations, they are at [no significantly greater risk of reoffense](#) than their totally compliant brothers and sisters.

Will someone occasionally go against the odds and commit a reoffense? Of course. But so will any given member of the community at large. In fact, the risk of a non-registered individual committing a sexual crime [is well over 90% higher](#) than the risk of a registrant doing so. Would law enforcement register and monitor the entire community if they had the funds?

To bolster their agenda and support their arguments, Fox uses a series of totally unsupported rhetoric and phrases. In fact, some are so vague as to be laughable.

"[C]ivilian monitors lack arrest authority and **some** question whether they are able to keep up." Some who? The people who hired them to do the job of keeping up with records? Surely when an arrest is needed, one of the police officers can do that. If the needed arrests of registrants are so high that the abilities of four actual officers are strained, why wasn't the number given? That is a fact that could – and should – have been included: since this change in personnel, how many arrests of persons on the registry have been required?

"[T]he staffing shortage has had **dire consequences** and is **potentially** responsible for a recent high-profile incident." **Dire** consequences? **Potentially** responsible? The high-profile incident referred to is an alleged reoffense, and if I said that it most likely would have occurred regardless, I would be criticized for a vague unsupported opinion, and rightly so. But "dire" and "potentially" are no less vague and unsupported

than “most likely” and no less of an opinion.

Still referring to the same incident, Fox reports, “They took those officers back and those officers were tasked with field visits, sex offender compliance checks, things that **could have prevented** things like this from happening.”

Could have prevented – another way of saying **potentially**. And who is the “they” that “took the officers back”? Would those in command of officer assignments in the Austin Police Department have truly removed officers from positions known to be crucial for public safety?

Not satisfied with “dire,” this decision has also had “a **devastating** impact on the lives of the citizens” and has “. . . created an **unsafe environment**.” And just as with “dire,” the reader is left wondering what the “devastating impact” and the “unsafe environment” are. No evidence is offered of either.

None of these, however, are the worst of Fox News’ blunders in the reporting of this piece, for near the end we are told, “The Austin Police Department told Fox News that it did not have a specific estimate of the number of cases handed over to civilians at this time, but a source tells Fox that it’s about 650 cases.”

And just like that, we are back to vague, unsupported, unidentifiable entities: a **source**. And, to compound the injury, it is a source who seems to have intimate knowledge of the Austin Police Department’s information that even they do not have since they lacked even an “estimate,” for is a “specific estimate” any more definitive than a non-specific estimate? An estimate is an estimate, and the APD did not have one. But the mysterious source did.

Responsible use of law enforcement resources requires initiatives empirically shown to be needed for public safety.

Responsible journalism saves emotionally charged language and

unsupported rhetoric for opinion pieces and does not present them, as it has done here, as news.