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NARSOL CONDEMNS SESSIONS' PLAN FOR LONGER PRISON SENTENCES

Washington, DC / May 12, 2017—The National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL) strongly denounces the Department of Justice's directive to reverse the Smart on Crime initiative introduced by the previous administration.

NARSOL condemns United States Attorney General Jeff Sessions' order to federal prosecutors directing that they seek maximum sentences. The length of sentence imposed at the end of a prosecution is the direct result of which charges are initially filed and the enhancements sought by the government. NARSOL views this policy reversal as misguided and financially irresponsible as it will undoubtedly lead to longer periods of incarceration for everyone convicted of federal offenses. The Sessions' policy is a drastic shift from the orders given by former Attorney General Holder in 2013 when he directed federal prosecutors to reserve the harshest charges for violent criminals and the leaders of drug cartels and urged more leniency to non-violent offenders.

NARSOL fears this order will only exacerbate what is already a serious problem of excessive sentences for those convicted of these crimes, which are primarily possession or distribution of child pornography. Because of this new order, the already harsh penalties will become more extreme and greater than the penalties for hands-on, violent offenses. Sometimes the sentences imposed for possession of child pornography exceed the natural lifespan of the person. More than 15,000 inmates are currently in federal custody serving time for these sexually related offenses.

Although the Smart on Crime initiative was not specifically tailored to reduce the excessive sentences imposed for sexual offenses, it was a significant step in the right direction, which has now, by virtue of Sessions' order, come to an abrupt halt.

NARSOL notes that the federal prison population has declined significantly in recent years from a high of 219,298 in FY 2013 to the current total of 188,797. The decrease in the number of federal prisoners was produced by several policy changes orchestrated by the U.S. Sentencing Commission and through the now-rescinded DOJ Smart on Crime directive. NARSOL views this current action as a tragic step backwards and calls on Congress to undo Sessions' order and continue the Smart on Crime initiative.

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR RATIONAL SEXUAL OFFENSE LAWS
Fighting to restore dignity & constitutional rights to millions.

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