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## **CIVIL RIGHTS GROUP CONDEMNS USE OF SEX OFFENDERS TO POISON FIRST STEP ACT**

### ***NARSOL calls on Senator Cotton to end his divisive stalling tactics***

**Raleigh, North Carolina | December 3, 2018**—The National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL) condemns Sen. Tom Cotton of Arkansas and a handful of his Republican colleagues who are resorting to scare tactics to prevent a vote on the First Step Act. This crucial legislation has been debated extensively already and has broad bipartisan backing and the endorsement of President Trump.

The National Sheriffs' Association has recently weighed in against the bill as it is written in spite of the fact that it is widely supported by other law enforcement agencies, most prominently the Fraternal Order of Police, the nation's largest law enforcement organization.

Despite the scare tactics used by Senator Cotton, the bill would allow for early release of the tiniest percentage of non-violent incarcerated persons. It would apply to only 1.5 percent of those in federal prisons, and the federal prison population is less than 10 percent of the total number of those incarcerated in the United States. The provisions of the legislation assure that the Federal Bureau of Prisons (BOP) would have total control over who might qualify for the early release provisions, and there is a list of offenses that would make a prisoner ineligible.

As of now, not all sexual offenses are on the ineligible list, as not all sexual offense charges involve behavior that was violent or dangerous to the public, and since there is a possibility that someone convicted of a sexual offense could benefit from the First Step Act, Senator Cotton is attempting to dissuade his fellow Republicans from supporting this bipartisan prison reform initiative.

“He is dividing the Republican caucus with his grandstanding, claiming that senators who are in support of the act will be helping sex offenders,” states Brenda Jones, NARSOL's executive director. “We have seen this tactic used over and over again by politicians, used against opponents who had the courage to support legislation based on facts and research but viewed as being ‘soft’ on those convicted of sexual offenses.”

The only opposition to the bill is from a small group of Republican senators, a fact stressed on NBC's *Meet the Press* by Sen. Lindsey Graham from South Carolina, himself a Republican, where he states, “Republicans are the problem here, not the Democrats.” In addition, Senator Graham noted that it is time for the United States to reevaluate its harsh sentencing practices which result in terms eight times longer than the rest of the world. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=No8fkRsH4Ic> 16:35 – 19:35).

### **NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR RATIONAL SEXUAL OFFENSE LAWS**

**Fighting to restore dignity & constitutional rights to millions**

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Studies bear out the fact that the re-offense rate for those who have committed sexual crimes is extremely low. “The government agencies do the studies,” Jones says. “They know what the rates are; they publish them. Anyone who bothers to be informed knows.” Jones continued, “Senator Cotton has opposed criminal justice reform in general, but the manner in which he is using this issue now is reprehensible. He knows that being accused of doing anything to help someone convicted of a sexual crime can spell the death sentence for a political career.”

NARSOL strongly supports criminal justice reform, prison reform, and the First Step Act. We call on Senator Cotton to cease his campaign of misdirection, and we join with Senator Graham in asking that all senators join their colleagues on both sides of the aisle in support of a much-needed beginning to meaningful criminal justice reform in America.

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