

Post Office Box 36123
Albuquerque, NM 87176
<https://narsol.org>



Post Office Box 25423
Raleigh, NC 27611
888.997.7765

Every year as Halloween approaches, many *Patch* media outlets, as well as others, publish articles featuring “red-dot” maps showing addresses, and sometimes names, of persons listed on sexual offense registries. Within the last few years, this practice has been adopted by some local police departments on their Facebook pages. According to the editors and publishers of such pieces, this is done in order to help protect children who will be trick or treating at Halloween.

The National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL) also wants children protected and kept safe. We are in full agreement with that goal. However, there is a total lack of evidence that the publication of these addresses at Halloween keeps children safe. Indeed, the volume of evidence showing no connection at all between Halloween and sexual harm done to children is numerous and [well documented](#).

“A heightened risk of being sexually abused is NOT one of the dangers children face at Halloween. The simple fact is that there are no significant increases in sex crimes on or around Halloween. There is no ‘Halloween effect.’ There is no change in the rate of sexual crimes by non-family members during Halloween. That was true both before and after communities enacted laws to restrict the activities of registrants during Halloween.” ([Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers \(ATSA\) 2019](#))

“. . . the scariest thing about Halloween today is the [fear](#)-mongering designed to persuade parents that their kids live in a neighborhood full of dangerous predators. And yet, the facts say otherwise.” (Marty Klein, [Psychology Today, 2018](#))

“Using national incident-based reporting system (NIBRS) crime report data from 1997 through 2005, we examined 67,045 non-familial sex crimes against children age 12 and younger. Halloween rates were compared to expectations based on time, seasonality and weekday periodicity. There were no significant increases in sex crimes on or around Halloween, and Halloween incidents did not demonstrate unusual case characteristics.” (Jill Levenson, [ATSA, 2014](#))

“Research shows no evidence of increased child sex abuse on Halloween. . . .” (Emily Horowitz, [Huffington Post, 2014](#))

Management practices that impose restrictions on registrants related to Halloween activities in an attempt to keep children from sexual harm do not make children or society safer.

Indeed, they can actually create situations that contribute to greater risk.

They perpetuate the myth of “stranger-danger,” thus diverting the focus away from where harm to children is much more likely to come. According to the [Huffington Post](#), “. . . government data shows the vast majority (about 93%) of sex crimes against children are not committed by strangers but by family members or acquaintances.”

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR RATIONAL SEXUAL OFFENSE LAWS

Fighting to restore dignity & constitutional rights to millions.

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They ignore one of the legitimate increased risks to children at Halloween, that of being injured or killed in car-child accidents. “Children are three times more likely to be fatally injured by a car on the [Halloween] holiday, and the risk grows to 10 times for kids 4 to 8.”
([Washington Post](#), 2019)

They further target and ostracize all who live in the home featured as a “red dot” or whose address is printed as belonging to one labeled a “sex offender.” As many registrants are married with children, this puts those children at risk for ridicule, vandalism, and harm to property and person.

The *Patch* publications, as well as others, justify this continued practice by responding that it is what their readers want. Journalism must always represent non-partisan truth telling. It must never cater to political correctness or advocate for any practice merely because it is consistent with public popular opinion but contrary to the facts based upon reliable data. Communities rely on *Patch* for information they can depend upon without reservation. This petition presents an opportunity for bringing the truth to *Patch*’s readers and reinforcing the integrity of journalistic ethics.

NARSOL and its affiliates, along with all of the other undersigned, call for an end to the publication of the names and/or addresses of persons registered as sexual offenders at Halloween under the guise of “public awareness” or “child protection.”

This campaign to reduce harm and to cease a hurtful publication practice that has no positive effect at all on child protection or public safety is endorsed by all of the following.

National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL) -- sponsor
One Standard of Justice (Connecticut) – co-sponsor
Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers (ATSA)
R. Karl Hanson, Ph.D., C.Psych, Carleton University and Ryerson University
Elizabeth J. Letourneau, Ph.D., Director, Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse,
Professor, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health
The opinions expressed herein are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Johns Hopkins University

Dr. Jill Levenson, PhD, LCSW, Professor of Social Work, Barry University
Fred S. Berlin, M.D. Ph.D., Director, National Institute for the Study, Prevention and Treatment of Sexual Trauma

Ira Ellman, Charles J. Merriam Distinguished Professor of Law and Affiliate Professor of Psychology, Emeritus, Arizona State University

Catherine L. Carpenter, Professor of Law
Chrysanthi Leon, JD, PhD, Associate Professor, Sociology and Criminal Justice
Alissa R. Ackerman, PhD
David S. Prescott, LCSW, LICSW, Editor, Safer Society Press
Maggie Ingram, MHS, Johns Hopkins University Bloomberg School of Public Health
Emily Horowitz, Ph.D.
Professor J.J. Prescott, University of Michigan
Ilan H. Meyer, Ph.D., UCLA School of Law
Erin B. Comartin, Ph.D., LMSW, Associate Professor of Social Work, Wayne State University
Prostasia Foundation
Meaghan Ybos, co-founder of People for the Enforcement of Rape Laws (PERL)
Heather Marlow, co-founder of People for the Enforcement of Rape Laws (PERL)
Robin J. Wilson, Ph.D., ABPP, Wilson Psychology Services LLC
Liam E. Marshall, Ph.D., RP, ATSAF, Rockwood Psychotherapy & Consulting, Canada

Dr. Jennifer L. Klein, Associate Professor, Undergraduate Coordinator, Criminal Justice, University of Texas at Tyler

Michael J. Gilbert, Ph. D., Associate Professor Emeritus (retired), Dept. of Criminal Justice & Criminology, University of Texas at San Antonio

Rev. J. Amos Caley, Salvation and Social Justice, Abolition Campaign Director; Abolish the Drug War, NJ Organizer

Joseph J. Plaud, Ph.D., M.A.T., Exec. Director, Applied Behavioral Consultants, LLC, Boston, MA

Janice M. Bellucci, civil rights attorney and E.D., Alliance for Constitutional Sex Offense Laws

Christopher P. Dum, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Sociology, Kent State University

Dr. Danielle T. Cooper, Associate Professor, Department of Criminal Justice, University of New Haven

Alliance for Constitutional Sex Offense Laws (ACSOL)

Dr. Jean Kennedy, Kennedy Consultant

Richard Resch, Managing Editor, *Criminal Legal News*

Brian Kelmar, Chairman of LRIDD (Legal Reform for Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled)

Dr. Meridith Spencer, Assistant Professor, Program Director, Criminal Justice, Fisher College

Dr. Danielle Bailey, Assistant Professor of Criminal Justice at the University of Texas at Tyler

Judge William Buhl, chair of the Professional Advisory Board to Michigan's Coalition for a Useful Registry

Ken Abraham, Founder, Citizens for Criminal JUSTICE

Robert B. Chatelle, Executive Director, National Center for Reason and Justice

Jefferson B. Davis, former CT state legislator and former registrant

Lisa Anne Zilney, Ph.D., Montclair State University

Scott H. Greenfield, Attorney and Blogger at *Simple Justice*

Nancy E. DiZio M.Ed LMHC, Associate Clinical Director, New England Forensic Associates
Human Rights Defense Center

Earl Yarrington, MSW, PhD, journalist, *Baltimore Post-Examiner*

Russell Dick, MSW

B4U-ACT, Inc.

Prison Legal News

Criminal Legal News

James H. Maynard, Esq., Maynard Law Office, LLC, New Jersey, specializing in sex offense law

Lenore Skenazy, advocate for rationality

Mary Kay Villaverde, social media coordinator, FSDP (Families for Sensible Drug Policy)

Rita Finley, CAUTIONclick National Campaign for Reform

Vicki Henry, President, Women Against Registry (W.A.R.)

E. King Alexander, Jr., attorney

Will Mingus, PhD, Editor in Chief, *LifeTimes* magazine

David Garlock

John Sloan, site manager, Women Against Registry of Florida

Norm Pattis, Pattis and Smith, LLC

Wayne Bowers, Executive Director, CURE-SORT

Melissa D. Grady, PhD, Associate Professor

Joshua Vaughn, reporter, *The Appeal*

David Mensah

Lois Pullano, Executive Director, Citizens for Prison Reform
Dr. Peter P. Ventura, Golden State Bible Baptist Prison Ministry
Joshua B. Hoe, Decarceration Nation
Michael McKay, Editor, *LifeTimes* magazine and *The Registry Report*
Marty Weiss
Phil Telfeyan, Executive Director, Equal Justice Under Law
Carolyn Gil
Thomas Chleboski, Vice-President of Maryland CURE
Tom Luettker, Esq., President, Ohio Association of Local Reentry Coalitions
Alexander Taubes, Esq. Civil Rights Attorney
Paul Rigney, Executive Director, Registrant Travel Action Group, Inc.
Joshua Hoe, Safe and Just Michigan
Rev. Patti Aupperlee
John S. Santa
Ohio Voices
Attorney Debra Beard Bader
William Canavan, Boston Release Network
Hope Metcalf, New Haven, Connecticut
The Michigan Center for Youth Justice
Ken Nolley, Ph.D., Professor Emeritus of English and Film Studies, Willamette University
Christopher Zoukis, MBA, author, managing director Zoukis Consulting Group
Timothy C. Moynahan, JD of The Moynahan Law Firm, LLC.
Kathleen Hambrick, *Lady Justice Myth Blog*
Christopher E. Pelloski, MD, author
Leslie M Lothstein, PhD, ABPP, CGP
Derek W. Logue of OnceFallen.com, registered citizen/civil rights advocate
Kathy Williams, paralegal
Michael Boyle, Law Offices of Michael Boyle
Families and Individuals for Reform (FAIR – Ohio)
Barbara Wright, attorney
Eric Tennen, attorney
Connie Cooper, retired special education teacher
Hallie Liebermann, sexual issues historian and journalist
Eden Koz, owner Just Be®, LLC
Susan. G. Figge, Behind Bars and Beyond Interfaith Working Group, Wooster
Vanita L. Nevis, program coordinator, ARCH (Returning Citizens with Hope) Ministry
Barbara Allan, founder, Prison Families Anonymous -- 50 YEARS OF HEALING FAMILIES
Phil Taylor, LPC, Dallas, TX
Glenn Gerding, attorney
Rory Fleming, attorney and advocate
Nebraskans Unafraid
Jeanie Mezger, Board of Directors, Nebraskans Unafraid
Stacey Borden, founder/president, New Beginnings Reentry Services, Inc.
Carol Tierney, SOPRI
Leonard A. Bard, Ph.D., forensic psychologist
Alice Benson, Director, Titus House Ministries
Martha Barbone, DVM, CPS, retired USAF officer
Alex Tischenko, Director, Revosys, Inc.
Sex Offender Solutions and Education Network (SOSEN)
Maria Laskowski, officer, OSJ, CN.
Tiheba Bain, Executive Director, Women Against Mass Incarceration
Beatrice Codianni, Executive Director, SWAN
Marty Klein, Ph.D, certified sex therapist, qualified forensic expert in human sexuality
Dr. Kate Sutton, Ph.D.
Rahisha Bivens, MSW social worker

Charlotte R. Simpson
Tatyana Manos
Dan Swern, Producing Director, coLAB Arts
Bill Himelhoch
Carol Tierney, SOPRI
Rosario Guzzi, Paralegal
John M. Campbell, Member, Texas Voices
Frank Bertram, Ph.D.
Eric Miller, concerned citizen
Noah Ford, law-abiding citizen
Tony Caruso, registrant since 1993, married, father of three, ages 5, 5, and 3
Sara Gonzalez
Efrain Morales, Jr
Tony B. Nelson
Jorge Guzman
Amanda Redfern
Alan Wulff
Jim Cornelio
Frans D. VanderBerg
Mr. and Mrs. Paul Laskowski, parents of a person listed on the sexual offense registry
Linda Quinet
John Crossley
Deborah Galasso
Jeffrey Scheckwitz
Michael Daniels, director of Justice Policy & Programs, Franklin County OH
Kenyatta M. Thompson, MSW, lead community organizer, Katal Center For Health, Equity, and Justice
Larni Levy, committee for public counsel services, MA
Larry Oxendine
Claire Best
Randall Wallace, PSY.D.
Carl Fisher
Carrie Werning
Amber Vlangas, E.D. Restorative Action Alliance (RAA)
Joseph Gaylin, New Haven, CT

NARSOL AFFILIATES, ADVOCATES, AND CONTACTS

Advocates for Change, Colorado
Arizonans for Rational Sexual Offense Laws
Arkansas Time After Time
Coalition for Sexual Offense Restoration (CSOR-CO)
Families Advocating Intelligent Registries, Maryland (FAIR)
Florida Action Committee (FAC)
Idaho Sex Offense Awareness & Reform (ISOAR)
Illinois Voices for Reform
Indiana Voices
Liberty and Justice Coalition, New Mexico
Michigan Citizens for Justice
Michigan's Coalition for a Useful Registry
NH Citizens for Criminal Justice Reform
North Carolinians for Rational Sexual Offense Laws
Ohio RSOL
Oklahoma for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (OKRSOL)
Oklahoma Voices
Oregon Voices

Pennsylvania for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (PARSOL)
Restore Georgia
Safer Virginia
Sex Offender Policy Reform Initiative (SOPRI-MA)
Tennessee4Change
Texas Voices for Reason and Justice
Vermonters for Criminal Justice Reform
West Virginia for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (WVRSOL)
Paul Shannon, Executive Committee, Sex Offender Policy Reform Initiative of Massachusetts
Allan Marain, attorney, NARSOL contact, New Jersey
Joseph Beaudoin, IT professional, father, NARSOL contact, Louisiana.
Mike Wilson, NARSOL advocate, Michigan
Ken Roberts, NARSOL contact, Mississippi
Patricia Borden, NARSOL advocate, Arizona
Terry Borden, NARSOL advocate, Arizona
Jeff Goetz, NARSOL contact, Kentucky
Jeff Miller, Victims Against the Registry, NARSOL advocate, Utah
Brenda Jones, ED FAIR; NARSOL advocate, Maryland
Jan Nolley, M.S.W., NARSOL advocate, Oregon
Michael Shimkin, executive board, SOPRI; NARSOL advocate, Massachusetts
Theresa Robertson, Ph.D., NARSOL contact, Pennsylvania
Timothy R. Burgess Advocate / Mediator, Vermont
Janna Tippits, NARSOL contact, Idaho
Margaret Hawkins, DE Assc. for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (DARSOL), NARSOL contact, Delaware
Bart Holt, NARSOL advocate, Montana
Casey Peppin, NARSOL advocate, Washington State
Janna Tippens, NARSOL contact, Idaho
Travis Hardy, NARSOL contact, Wyoming
Dave Frank, NARSOL advocate, Wisconsin
Don Thurber, NARSOL advocate, South Carolina
Lori Hamilton, Executive Director, OK Voices, NARSOL advocate, Oklahoma
Susan Walker, Director/Regional Coordinator, CSOR and NARSOL, NARSOL advocate, Colorado
Cindy Prizzio, NARSOL advocate, CT, E.D. One Standard of Justice, NARSOL advocate, Connecticut
Sandy Rozek, Communications Director, NARSOL