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Governor Doyle Announces Progress in Tracking Down and Monitoring Dangerous Sex Offenders

Offers New Proposals to Protect Families from Dangerous Sexual Predators

OAK CREEK – Governor Jim Doyle announced today that his Sex Offender Accountability and Felony Enforcement (SAFE) Initiative has made major strides in the last five months in protecting public safety, including tracking down more than 400 sex offenders who have failed to comply with the state's sex offender registration law. Governor Doyle also ordered the creation of a "Wisconsin's Most Wanted" list and called for more regional cooperation in tracking and apprehending sex offenders.

"Wisconsin is leading the nation with new strategies for tracking down dangerous sex offenders and helping to keep Wisconsin's neighborhoods safe," Governor Doyle said. "I applaud the efforts of law enforcement officials and the public who have been working together under the SAFE Initiative to track down and monitor these dangerous predators, and make Wisconsin's kids and communities safer."

Progress of SAFE Initiative

- **436 sex offenders who have evaded the state's registry, including 273 who committed crimes against juveniles, have been tracked down under the SAFE Initiative.**

As part of the SAFE Initiative, Governor Doyle directed the Department of Corrections (DOC) and the Office of Justice Assistance (OJA) to form "SAFE Teams," comprised of retired law enforcement professionals and DOC sex offender registry specialists to track down sex offenders who are not in compliance with the sex offender registry law. The SAFE Teams work closely with law enforcement agencies around the state to arrest and hold accountable those sex offenders who are trying to become anonymous in our communities.

- **The compliance rate for the state's registry of sex offenders is now 88 percent, compared to 76 percent nationally.**

Coordination among law enforcement agencies has forced more sex offenders into compliance with state law, raising the rate of compliance from 82 percent ten months ago, when Governor Doyle first ordered a crackdown on sex offenders who have not complied with the sex offender registry.

- **The most dangerous sexual predators in Wisconsin, those who have been committed under the states Chapter 980 law and then placed on supervised release, are now being tracked using state-of-the-art Global Positioning System (GPS) monitoring.**

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As part of the SAFE Initiative, the DOC and the Department of Health and Family Services (DHFS) has placed all of the state's most dangerous sexual offenders – those sexually violent persons involuntarily committed and placed on supervised release in the community under the Wisconsin's Sexual Predator Law (Chapter 980) – on GPS monitoring.

- **Usage of the sex offender registry web site has tripled since the public has been able to search for sex offenders in neighborhoods throughout the state.**

Visits to the registry web site, which contains information about the more than 18,000 sex offenders, increased after home addresses were added in December. The site averaged approximately 25,000 visits per week prior to the addition, and has averaged roughly 75,000 visits per week since. The public can now access addresses along with updated, enlargeable photographs of the offender's face, physical descriptions, conviction information, compliance status, and in some cases, contact information for the agency supervising the sex offender. The web site also includes information about sex offender laws and rules of supervision, as well as educational resources to help reduce the risk of sexual violence. Citizens can access the registry online at: <http://WIDOCOffenders.org>.

"Our success has been tremendous, but keeping our kids safe is a never-ending job. We will remain vigilant, and continue to develop new ways to find, prosecute, and track these predators," Governor Doyle said.

New Proposals for SAFE Initiative

- **'Wisconsin's Most Wanted' List**

Governor Doyle is directing the SAFE Task Force to develop and launch "Wisconsin's Most Wanted", a list of Wisconsin's most dangerous sex offenders who are evading registry requirements and seeking to move undetected through Wisconsin communities. The goal of "Wisconsin's Most Wanted" is to build public awareness of Wisconsin's most dangerous predators and enlist the public in protecting our communities by working with SAFE Teams and law enforcement to track down these offenders.

The Governor is calling on the SAFE Task Force, a group of top law enforcement leaders from around the state to oversee the creation of the list. Once compiled, the list will be available to the public on Wisconsin's Sex Offender Registry web site, the DOC's Department web site, and through media outlets throughout the state.

- **Midwest Summit on Sex Offender Registry Issues**

Governor Doyle also called on DOC Secretary Matthew Frank to convene a summit of leaders from across the Midwest to build regional cooperation with other states, so that if a convicted sex offender moves across state lines, law enforcement are able to track and monitor these predators

In addition, the summit will provide an opportunity for states to collaborate and share best practices in tracking down noncompliant sex offenders.

Announced in September 2005, Governor Doyle's SAFE Initiative involves state, local, and federal partners in a comprehensive agenda to keep Wisconsin kids and communities safe from sex offenders by tracking down predators, preventing them from becoming anonymous in our communities, and apprehending and prosecuting those sex offenders who fail to notify authorities of their whereabouts, as required by law. In addition, the SAFE Initiative includes new tools to increase public awareness about sex offenders in Wisconsin communities and to engage Wisconsin citizens as partners in holding sex offenders accountable for their actions.

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The public can anonymously report tips about noncompliant sex offenders to the "SAFE Tip" hotline. The toll-free "SAFE Tip" hotline is 1-877-234-0085, or by email at docsafetips@doc.state.wi.us. Calls will be answered by DOC staff Monday through Friday between 7:45 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.

More information on Governor Doyle's SAFE Initiative can be found at:

http://www.wisgov.state.wi.us/journal_media_detail.asp?prid=1358&locid=19