

Ms. Sweet,

I watched the hearing on May 6th on the proposed revisions to the SORA in response to the finding that it is unconstitutional as-is. There was some really good testimony there that reflects not only the viewpoint of the offenders, but of the victims of those offenders. The research is clear: sex offenders are a low risk population that do not warrant the level of limitations in the current legislation.

I have been a victim of being taken advantage of sexually and now I am a mom of a sex offender. Watching the testimony made me realize the pain is real for others too and it motivated me to write this.

My son was railroaded into a sex offense in 2012 by taking a plea because he was told if he went to trial he could lose and end up doing more time for an offense he didn't commit than if he took the low end of the sentence by pleading. When he went to prison, he met inmates who were victims of the system as-is and who went to trial, only to end up doing MORE time than if they had taken the plea. Even though my son did not do the crime, he did the time and believes he had to or would have ended up with MORE time, like some of the inmates he met. That is surely a travesty, since he did not do the offense he was accused of, but that is not what I came today to address. Some day I may pursue how wrong it is that my son carries the Scarlet Letter for an offense he did not do, but not today.

Today I want to share with you the parts of SORA that are preventing my son from moving forward in his life after serving his time. It is heartbreaking to witness as a mom, and beyond that, I too am ostracized.

1. RESTRICTIONS ON WORK - Being on the registry limits the jobs a man can do, SEVERELY. Even though my son has a roofing job and makes decent money, there are roofing jobs he is not allowed to work on so it brings attention from his co-workers as to why he is not there, which leads to the word getting out that he is a sex offender - he is then insulted relentlessly by his co-workers which is severely damaging to his self esteem. (add the insult that he didn't even do the crime and that is even more damaging)
2. RESTRICTIONS ON JOBS WITHIN THE WORK -The roofing company he works for will not allow him to go to the jobs that are for schools so he gets called out by his co-workers AND misses out on the increased income that is offered by schools AND if there is not other job he can work on during that time period, he loses ALL INCOME.
3. RESTRICTIONS ON INTERNET - The restriction on internet access keeps him from continuing in college. For two semesters before his last incarceration he achieved 4.0 and was invited to participate in Honor Society. He wants to get his education, but as we all know, much of education is online now.
4. RESTRICTIONS ON HOUSING - He can't live anywhere with any dignity except my house. With the registry being open for all to see, landlords will not take him as a tenant, and the landlords who do take SO's offer borderline unsafe places to live. Now that he lives with me, my house address shows up on the internet as having negative connotations to be searched. Now the whole world gets to know that a sex offender lives in my house, even after he doesn't live here!
5. RESTRICTIONS ON SOCIAL INTERACTIONS - I have been ostracized from an internet application for my neighborhood called "Nextdoor.com" which connects neighbors in a neighborhood on things like classifieds, lost and found, alerts and service recommendations. Because they found my son on the registry, I am no longer allowed to have an account on this neighborhood app. That hurt. I no longer get

to take part in neighborhood news, information or message boards. I don't even get Neighborhood Watch emails anymore and I used to get them every month.

It is for these reasons I believe the registry should only be available for police to see.

There is no reason to restrict access to schools if a man is going there under the supervision of an employer. I heard the testimony of the fathers who are not allowed to attend school functions and that is devastating to a family. That is punishment beyond prison. They did their time. Stop punishing them.

There is no reason the neighbors need to know there is a sex offender living in the neighborhood unless he has been evaluated as a recidivism risk - in which case he would not be released from prison anyway, so it is unlikely the neighbors are under any threat.

There is no reason a former sex offender shouldn't have a decent place to live if he can pay for it, which he will be able to pay for it if employers can't look him up on the internet to see he is a sex offender.

There is no reason why a former sex offender should have to take construction work or work that is beneath him because he can't use a computer. The internet is the most powerful self-development tool available to humans, so cutting that off is cutting off access to improvement.

There is no reason a former sex offender should have to register for the public to view. It really is like being on a list of witches during the Witch Trials.

Please consider scrapping the current SORA and developing laws that are humane and promote success for former inmates who just want to live a normal life with all the opportunities available to anyone who isn't a sex offender. THEY WANT TO BE PRODUCTIVE, TAX PAYING CITIZENS.

Sandra Zukowski