

*Statement of the Honorable Paul E. Gillmor
Committee on Energy & Commerce
Subcommittee on Telecommunications & the Internet
Hearing on H.R. 5319: the Deleting Online Predators Act of 2006
July 11, 2006*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for holding this very important hearing. As a member of this subcommittee and as a strong advocate for increasing our nation's sex offender laws, I see this hearing as an important step in protecting our country's children from violent predators.

As the sponsor of two bills, H.R. 95 and H.R. 4815, aimed at giving American families unfettered access to the necessary information they need to protect themselves from violent sexual offenders, I believe that our schools and libraries have been taken for granted as a safe haven that is free from illicit and illegal cyber content. Although I agree with the concepts promoted by H.R. 5319, I believe today's discussion is simply the beginning of an in-depth dialogue between policymakers and industry leaders because social-networking and chat technologies are not inherently bad and offer many benefits—yet we must ensure the safety of our children.

In a recent study funded by the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, Dr. David Finkelhor, Director of the Crimes Against Children Research Center, found that one in every five children received a sexual approach or solicitation over the Internet in the past year. Additionally, in a separate study commissioned by the National Association of School Resource Officers and conducted by National School Safety and Security Services, a leading independent national school safety and security firm based in Cleveland, Ohio, showed 55% school safety officers stating that concerns regarding Internet-based crimes had increased in their school-community in the past two years. Mr. Chairman, these are alarming statistics and we must take the necessary steps to protect our nation's families and before tragedy can befall another needless victim.

Mr. Chairman, I have been pleased to work closely with the Safe Now Project on both of my bills, and I look forward to continuing to work with them, members of this committee, industry, and leadership to ensure that our nation's most precious asset—our children—are protected while allowing consumers to continue to realize the benefits of these technologies. This challenge must be met and a delicate balance must be struck, but we must come together in good faith to make certain that our schools and libraries continue to be a sanctuary for learning and growth.

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