



FIGHTING THE DESTRUCTION OF FAMILIES

Media Kit

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 **Do we really want to punish innocent family members ?** 

WOMEN AGAINST REGISTRY
Organization Overview

Women Against Registry is a Nationwide non-profit organization dedicated to the fair treatment and redemption of those who are incarcerated for sex offenses, those required to be listed on the sex offender registry after incarceration, and to the family members of both. The W.A.R. organization consists almost entirely of members from within the ranks of these groups.

Much of society is willfully blind and woefully uneducated about the injustice thrust upon these groups of citizens. And many W.A.R. members themselves were similarly naive about sex offense laws until they were confronted with them in a sudden and ugly way. Many W.A.R. members would probably admit that before they knew better, they too held fast to an ingrained disdain for anyone owning the label; “sex offender.” But now, better-educated about these issues, they see a vast injustice. Most members of our society, including most W.A.R. members, tend to have boundless empathy for the victims of any crime but justice has to be balanced or it is not justice at all.

Another issue that W.A.R. members have educated themselves about is the practice of civil commitment. The Federal government and 20 states have civil commitment laws that were created from 1990 to 2007. These programs incarcerate people who are suspected of being sexually violent predators. This is essentially additional incarceration without any specified term. It is often adjudicated in the name of preventing crimes but this is a dangerous departure from traditional judicial values. If we can start locking people up in the name of prevention, then we are all in trouble. Any confinement, whether it is considered to be for punishment of a crime or required for therapy, should have a clear path to restoration and re-integration.

W.A.R. members and their families and friends are, at times, sad, anxious, depressed, scared, frustrated and angry. Many have faced any number of various biased actions in their attempts to piece together a decent life after paying their debt to society. These actions include, but are not limited to: threats; dismissal from jobs; harassment by neighbors or coworkers; eviction from apartments; removal from their homes due to residency restrictions; damage to personal property; prohibition from their children’s school events, including graduation; termination of church membership; not being allowed to enter daycare facilities, schools, museums, libraries, and parks; homelessness; and physical attacks.



Women Against Registry gives these people a platform, a voice, and a safe place in a chaotic life. We attempt to educate politicians and the public; we host support groups, we host conferences, we join in litigation efforts, and we support or denounce legislation. We have delved into a number of advocacy tactics over the years but our organization started as a support to those who are required to be listed on the sex offender registry; and to their family members; and to this day, that is the motivation that drives us.

WOMEN AGAINST REGISTRY
Biographical Information

The President of Women Against Registry

Vicki Henry re-established Women Against Registry in 2011. Her purpose at that time - and continuing to this day - was to be the voice for family members of those required to register. She is a tireless, passionate worker for this cause. She works long hours while rarely taking personal time. Over the years, Vicki has been a visible and vocal presence as W.A.R.'s President and as such, has many friends and admirers within this advocacy. She has more than a few detractors as well; but that is a crystal-clear indicator that she speaks her mind and stands her ground on the issues that she believes in. Those are qualities that you want in the leader of an organization. Vicki leads by example. At any given time, she might be speaking at a conference, commenting on a news article, communicating with other national advocates, working on the details of W.A.R.'s next conference, attending a support meeting, visiting someone who is incarcerated, testifying for a bill in a legislative hearing, comforting someone on the phone, educating an individual who is unaware of this issue, having a stern discussion with a senator, or conducting any number of other advocacy efforts. These endeavors are generally long, difficult and frustrating. The victories are often few and far between. But one thing that gives Vicki particular pleasure is to watch a W.A.R. member turn into a supporter; and then, slowly, into an advocate.

When she takes a break from her calling in life, she enjoys working in the garden, making fudge, and searching Pinterest for yet more things to fill her time. She lives outside St. Louis, Missouri. You can reach her at vicki.henry@womenagainstry.com, Families of Registrants on LinkedIn or @WomenAgainstReg on Twitter.

 **Is it really our intention to punish children
as young as 10, 12 and 14 years old.....
for the rest of their lives?** 

WOMEN AGAINST REGISTRY
Key Organizational Messages

Vision Statement

The vision of this organization is to abolish the multiple sex offender registries across this nation. Women Against Registry also seeks to restore Life, Health and Freedom to all individuals who have been injured by the requirements of registration, especially innocent family members. We foresee a day when the suffocating stigma surrounding registration will be removed in favor of proper sentencing coupled with appropriate treatment; a day when the indefinite detention of civil commitment is replaced with compassionate programs designed to heal and restore. We hope for a day when virtually all who have offended against the laws of the land will be given the opportunity to rebuild a decent, honest life with the prospect of rehabilitation, reintegration, and redemption.

Mission Statement

Through peaceful demonstrations, civic forums, media programs, personal accounts, and political events, we will attempt to educate society about the severe cost and complete beneficial void of maintaining federal, state, county, and municipal sex offender registries across this nation. The monumental costs associated with registries include monitoring, maintenance, and manpower for law enforcement organizations; the outrageously high cost of incarceration; the loss of millions of dollars in tax revenue, the truly false sense of neighborhood security; and by far, the most devastating cost of all is the loss of freedom, security, health and safety for the families associated in some way to this grand injustice. In addition, families who are trying to support their loved ones under trying circumstances, are being forced to pay outlandish commissary, phone, and travel fees.

Women Against Registry will be the voice of a vastly misunderstood subset of society. We will be the voice through stories that often relate a tragic, sorrowful, and brutally honest tale. We will be the voice of so many who, because of fear and stigma, cannot yet find their own voice. This is a difficult issue but we are resolute in our determination to be heard.

By speaking in calm voices about humanitarian treatment backed by facts; by conversing with friends, family members and strangers; by articulating points of injustice and fairness to legislators; by speaking at conferences and at schools; by expressing opinions on radio and television programs; by writing and responding to news and magazine articles; by all these methods and more, we will be heard. We are the soft but growing sound of more than 900,000 citizens required to register and perhaps more than 2.5 million family members.

There is simply no value in a registry system. There is incontrovertible scientific evidence showing extremely low recidivism rates for those who have committed sex offenses. As such, there are far too many individuals suffering the stigma of registration unnecessarily. It is the mission of Women Against Registry to change that reality.

We Believe

- ALL children have the right to grow up in an environment that is safe from harm.
- ALL families have the right to heal after pain.
- The public deserves fair laws and policies that will achieve these goals.
- Placing a person, and by association, an entire family on a registry is demonstrably ineffective at protecting women and children from harm; in fact, it does just the opposite.
- Families, and in fact, entire communities are subjected to vulnerability, fear and divisive behavior when legislators pass reactive registry laws in the name of public safety. Numerous scientific studies have clearly indicated that registries do nothing more than perpetuate a false sense of security.
- Scientific studies show that with appropriate treatment programs, a home, a job, and a stable, supportive environment most people on the registry will not re-offend.
- Some people, perhaps many, could avoid becoming sex offenders and having to register if they could seek treatment at the first acknowledgement of a problem. But many are rightfully afraid of the stigma and legal response they face in these circumstances.
- People who commit sexual offenses should be punished with a fair sentence equivalent to the severity of the crime - nothing more.
- The current method of 'one-size-fits-all' clinical therapy and punitive treatment does more harm than good. A proper program should include a detailed assessment based on current risk levels and a therapy plan that considers psychological make-up and mitigating circumstances.
- After paying their reasonable debt to society, perpetrators should be allowed every opportunity to reintegrate back into the community.
- The general public gains no advantage by knowing the names and locations of those who have registered. However, these individuals and their families risk significant reprisals as a result of the public knowing their information.
- As with any crime category, true violent and predatory sex offenders with no motivation to change will always be a risk to public safety.
- A trustworthy psycho-sexual risk assessment that shows a proclivity for violent or predatory sexual behavior should warrant (perhaps) a longer sentence, a longer probationary period, or monitoring; but not a registration program.
- Persons should have a clear avenue to exit the system if a low-risk assessment can be achieved by means of step-by-step, measurable treatment program.
- When the family is placed on a registry:
 - some or all members face probable loss of jobs and the inability to find gainful employment.
 - they may face probable eviction from their apartment because of landlord bias, or because the landlord is being harassed by other tenants.
 - they may be forced to move because of proximity to a school or a daycare or a park.
 - some or all members face harassment by neighbors, vigilantes, and even law enforcement personnel.
 - they may have signs placed in their yard, they may have their property damaged, or they may be attacked by vigilantes.
 - they often live in constant fear for their own safety.

Goals Allowing Families to Reintegrate

- Rescind punitive registry laws; abolish registries
- Rescind civil commitment statutes in lieu of practices designed to help perpetrators become productive members of society
- Challenge civil and judicial rules and procedures, including irrational sentencing practices
- Aid the reintegration process by eliminating residency restrictions.
- Prohibit employers, schools and apartment owners/managers from asking if applicants have been convicted of a crime.
- Provide assistance through specifically designed programs to help those recently released from incarceration to successfully reenter society.
- Provide guidance and oversight to probation officers so they understand that their mission is to monitor and help those under their supervision; not to harass.
- Promote ‘diversion programs’ in lieu of re-incarceration for those who break parole with minor non-sexual infractions such as arriving late to a registry appointment or losing a job for reasons out of their control. These infractions should never be considered as recidivism or used to bolster statistics that are intended to burden a segment of society.
- Stop the egregious policy that allows lengthy incarceration to create onerous debt and in turn, seriously curtails, and often completely prevents restoration.
- Strive for cost-effective laws that will truly protect children and adults from sexual harm
- Ensure that all people are offered equal protection against unlawful discrimination
- Promote and strengthen positive and healthy relationships among all persons affected by sexual offenses; and help all of those people to heal by restoring the victim, restoring the perpetrator, restoring the affected families, and restoring the community.
- Develop educational programs and public service announcements that teach parents and professionals ways to empower and protect children.
- Change the law so that all acts of harassment and vigilantism against those required to register or their family members are treated as “Hate Crimes.”

Position Paper on the Sex Offender Registry

Women Against Registry (W.A.R.) is an organization dedicated to the abolition of the sex offender registry. This essay will outline the principal reasons for our stance and why we are resolute in our belief that the registry serves no purpose and is, therefore, a waste of taxpayer’s money. Note: we acknowledge that every state operates its own separate registry and that they are sometimes quite different from the registries in other states. For the purpose of this essay, the term “sex offender registry” is a general reference to all registries.

The sex offender registry is ineffective in the prevention of crime, despite the fact that this is one of its primary intentions. Scientific studies have conclusively shown that the registry does **not** deter crime, it does **not** decrease the occurrence of sex offenses, and it does **not** increase public safety. In fact, quite to the contrary, the registry sometimes increases crime because it forces registrants into unemployment, homelessness, and desperation. The registry works to thwart rehabilitation efforts while its supporters fail to recognize recent studies proving that most registrants are at a very low risk of reoffending.

Collateral damage refers to the harm inflicted on the family members of registrants. Collateral damage was almost certainly an unintended consequence of the creation of the registry, but when the sex offender list became available to the public, collateral damage became a very real punishment for those who had not committed a crime. These punishments include verbal abuse, harassment, property damage and physical attack by vigilantes, loss of employment, loss of residence, reprisals for children at school, and public shaming. Sometimes these behaviors are even sanctioned by authorities.¹² The punishing effect of the registry on innocent family members was one of the primary reasons for the formation of Women Against Registry. This cruelty is unconscionable. Fear and ignorance drive the public outcry for increasingly harsh punishment and for the maintenance of the registry, but as we wait for logic and reason to win out, families are being torn apart and lives are being destroyed.

Women Against Registry stands strongly in opposition to all sex offender registries for the reasons outlined in this position paper. But we would like to emphasize that a public registry is especially cruel and invites vigilantism without any benefit whatsoever. The public registry promotes numerous punitive measures against many who have already paid a substantial debt to society.

We believe the registry is a clear violation of the fifth amendment of the United States Constitution and its prohibition against double jeopardy. We believe that lifetime registration is cruel and unusual punishment, and a violation of the Constitution's eighth amendment. And, in far too many cases, we believe that the placement of individuals on the registry violates the Due Process clauses of the fifth and fourteenth amendments to the Constitution. Obviously, the vast majority of US courts do not currently agree with our interpretation.

It is logical, smart, and humane to help incarcerated individuals rebuild their lives after their debt to society has been paid. To do this, we could, and should offer them counseling while incarcerated and various forms of help after their release. At the very least, they deserve *not* to be hindered in their efforts.

We strongly support the need for public safety however, the current public outrage over the sex offender label is largely misplaced. It is a fallacy to think that all sex offenders fit neatly into a single classification. A disdainful response or a contemptuous look is the normal reaction to almost anyone labelled as a "sex offender" and yet, there are numerous individuals on the registry who are guilty of behavior that many of us would find innocent, silly, stupid, or juvenile; but certainly not criminal.³ Educating the public about this issue would go a long way toward changing the laws in this country. And in fact, education is W.A.R.'s primary modus operandi to achieving its goals.

The Supreme Court of the United States, one of the world's most respected legal bodies, played an enormous role in promoting the fear and ignorance that has now become the bane of every sex offender across this country.

In 2002, Justice Anthony Kennedy, a Supreme Court Justice, erroneously wrote that the recidivism rate for sex offenders is as high as 80%, a number that is "frightening and high."⁴ This statement has plagued American Jurisprudence since that time with seriously consequential results for those who have

fallen under the broad umbrella that is defined as sex crimes. This erroneous statement has been used as justification in more than 100 state and federal sex offender cases. Justice Kennedy's statement was traced to a single source in a Psychology Today magazine, however, multiple scientific studies over the years, have conclusively debunked this statement. Actual recidivism rates vary for many reasons however, all of the studies place the value far below the 80% cited by Justice Kennedy. Numerous studies have reported the re-arrest rate of convicted sex criminals at 5% or less, lower than most other crime categories.⁵ Other studies, by individual states reflect similar recidivism rates. Some studies show sex crime and recidivism rates are basically unchanged since the registry began which is yet more evidence of the ineffectiveness of the registry.

Justice Kennedy's pronouncement has, in part, fueled some extreme and unreasonable state legislation that has pushed registrants to the fringes of society. Some states have enacted strict residency restrictions regarding such common facilities as schools, day cares, libraries, museums, parks, swimming pools, and more. Lawmakers are a big part of the problem as they strive to get reelected and to please a fearful public. But just as the system seems so wildly outside the norms of human decency and justice, there are glimmers of hope. There have been recent litigation wins in Alabama⁶, Colorado⁷, Indiana⁸, Michigan⁹, North Carolina¹⁰, and others.

The financial cost of monitoring sex offenders and maintaining the registry is prohibitively high. We can make that statement with absolute confidence because of the other factors stated in this paper. With the complete ineffectiveness of the registry, the threat to the registrant families, and the many pending and future lawsuits regarding constitutionality, *any* cost would be prohibitively high. When considering the financial burden of this program, we must also consider the high cost of incarceration and the loss of tax revenue from those in prison and from unemployed registrants. As of this writing, there are more than 912,000 men, women, and children on the sex offender registry in this country, according to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children; that equates to some very large expenses and some very large revenue losses. Many law enforcement agencies freely admit that they cannot adequately maintain the registry because of a shortage of money and personnel. The registry is clearly not providing a good return on the investment. This money could be better-spent on so many other programs.

Women Against Registry believes, without any hesitation, reservation, or doubt, that the sex offender registry is detrimental to our society and needs to be abolished. We understand that current public opinion, driven largely by fear and ignorance, creates a tremendous obstacle to the achievement of this goal. In lieu of the immediate sweeping changes we seek, W.A.R. would welcome improvements to the registry such as restricting it to law enforcement use only, the removal of juveniles, and the inclusion of only those at high risk of re-offense as determined by a fair process run by independent professionals. However, despite any short-term victories in this fight for justice, we will continue to work toward the abolition of the registry because:

1. It is completely ineffective
2. It is the direct cause of deplorable and cruel collateral damage
3. It is unconstitutional
4. In its current form, it is largely the result of fear-mongering and a lack of knowledge about the facts surrounding this issue.
5. It is fiscally irresponsible and wasteful
6. We believe it to be immoral, unethical, and illegal

As a society, aren't we better than this?

¹ <https://on-vigilantism.blogspot.com/search/label/Vigilantism%20-%20By%20Police>

² <https://with-justiceforall.blogspot.com/2017/11/do-sentenced-sex-offenders-deserve.html>

³ www.gainesville.com/opinion/20170104/jean-zeeb-column-misleads-about-sex-offenders

⁴ https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/188087/30_03_495_Ellman.pdf

⁵ <https://www.womenagainstry.org/recidivism>

⁶ <https://reason.com/2019/02/13/sex-offenders-are-not-second-class-citiz/>

⁷ mediaassets.thedenverchannel.com/document/2017/09/01/millard_knight_vega_v_colorado_65483340_ver1.0.pdf

⁸ <https://www.theindianalawyer.com/articles/50120-th-circuit-rules-doc-sex-offender-program-violates-constitution>

⁹ www.opn.ca6.uscourts.gov/opinions.pdf/16a0207p-06.pdf

¹⁰ https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/16pdf/15-1194_0811.pdf

WOMEN AGAINST REGISTRY
Organization Brochures

The following brochures can be found at this link: <https://womenagainstregistry.org/brochures>

- How Families Are Affected by the Sex Offender Registry
- Sexting: It's Not Just Child's Play

 **Do we really want to accept unconstitutional laws and practices
to satisfy our thirst for punishment?** 

WOMEN AGAINST REGISTRY
Critical References

Articles/Studies:

- Burn your sex offender map (<https://freerangekids.wordpress.com/2009/08/08/burn-your-sex-offender-map/>) *Skenazy*
- Column misleads about sex offenders (www.gainesville.com/opinion/20170104/jean-zeeb-column-misleads-about-sex-offenders) *The Gainesville Sun/Jean Zeeb*
- Recidivism among sex offenders in Connecticut (www.ct.gov/opm/lib/opm/cjppd/cjresearch/recidivismstudy/sex_offender_recidivism_2012_final.pdf) *State of Connecticut Office of Policy and Management*
- Facts and Fiction about sex offenders www.corrections.com/articles/24500-facts-and-fiction-about-sex-offenders *corrections.com/Chris Dornin*
- Frightening and High: The Supreme Court's crucial mistake about sex crime statistics (https://conservancy.umn.edu/bitstream/handle/11299/188087/30_03_495_Ellman.pdf) *Ira and Tara Ellman*
- How Safe Are Trick-or-Treaters? An Analysis of Child Sex Crime Rates on Halloween (https://www.researchgate.net/publication/26651243_How_Safe_Are_Trick-or-Treaters_An_Analysis_of_Child_Sex_Crime_Rates_on_Halloween) *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment/Chaffin, Levinson, Letourneau, Stern*
- It's time to rethink how we treat child sex offenders (www.abc.net.au/news/2017-09-22/its-time-to-rethink-how-we-treat-child-sex-offenders/8961674) *ABC Australia/Melville*
- Juveniles Who Commit Sex Offenses Against Minors (<https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/ojdp/227763.pdf>) *Juvenile Justice Bulletin/Finkelhor, Ormrod, Chaffin*
- National Estimates of Registered Sex Offenders in the United States: Is Double Counting a Problem? (www.academia.edu/9509307/National_Estimates_of_Registered_Sex_Offenders_in_the_United_States_Is_Double_Counting_a_Problem) *Ackerman*
- Once a Sex Offender, Always a Sex Offender? Maybe not (www.scientificamerican.com/article/misunderstood-crimes/) *Scientific American/Arkowitz, Lilienfeld*
- Predator Panic: A Closer Look (www.csicop.org/si/show/predator_panic_a_closer_look/) *The Committee For Skeptical Inquiry/Radford*
- Punishment That Doesn't Fit the Crime (https://www.nytimes.com/2016/07/31/opinion/sunday/punishment-that-doesnt-fit-the-crime.html?_r=1) *The New York Times/Berkowitz*
- Residence Restrictions Are Ineffective, Inefficient, and Inadequate: So Now What? (www.academia.edu/8770099/) *Socia*
- Sex Offenders and Public Safety: A Four-Part Series (wvtf.org/post/sex-offenders-and-public-safety-four-part-series) *Virginia Public Radio/Hausman*
- Sex Offenders on Federal Community Supervision: Factors that Influence Revocation (https://www.uscourts.gov/sites/default/files/70_1_3_0.pdf) *Federal Probation Journal/Johnson*
- Sex Offenders: Recidivism, Re-Entry Policy and Facts (www.huffingtonpost.com/paul-heroux/sex-offenders-recidivism_b_976765.html) *The Huffington Post/Paul Heroux*
- Sex Offender Registration: Why Fear Isn't Smart Policy (<https://thecrimereport.org/2017/05/04/sex-offender-registration-why-fear-isnt-smart-policy/>) *The Crime Report/Day*

- Shawna: A life on the sex offender registry (<https://www.themarshallproject.org/2017/09/17/shawna-a-life-on-the-sex-offender-registry>) *The Marshall Project/Feige*
- States Struggle To Control Sex Offender Costs (<https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=127220896>) *National Public Radio/Greenblat*
- Studies question effectiveness of sex offender laws (<https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/08/110830165016.htm>) *Science Daily/Agan*
- What is the Most Common Age of a Sex Offender? (Surprise!) (www.freerangekids.com/what-is-the-most-common-age-of-a-sex-offender-surprise/) *Skenazy*
- When junk science about sex offenders infects the Supreme Court (<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/12/opinion/when-junk-science-about-sex-offenders-infects-the-supreme-court.html>) *The New York Times/Feige*
- Why sex offender registries don't work (<https://qz.com/708265/why-sex-offender-registries-dont-work/>) *Quartz/Berlatsky*

Consequences:

- "Brothers Under the Bridge": Factors Influencing the Transience of Registered Sex Offenders in Florida (www.academia.edu/14305763/) *Levinson*
- Collateral Damage: Family Members of Registered Sex Offenders (https://www.academia.edu/2501229/Collateral_Damage_Family_Members_of_Registered_Sex_Offenders) *Levinson, Tewksbury*
- www.academia.edu/2501233/ *Levinson*
- New evidence says US sex-offender policies are actually causing more crime (<https://qz.com/869499/new-evidence-says-us-sex-offender-policies-dont-work-and-are-actually-causing-more-crime/>) *Quartz/Yoder*
- Scapegoating The Sex Offender (www.academia.edu/37730380/) *Northley*
- When juveniles are found guilty of sexual misconduct, the sex-offender registry can be a life sentence (<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2016/03/14/when-kids-are-accused-of-sex-crimes>) *The New Yorker/Stillman*

Laws:

- Assumptions and Evidence Behind Sex Offender Laws: Registration, Community Notification, and Residence Restrictions (www.academia.edu/929536/) *Socia*
- Sex Offender laws in the US (<https://www.hrw.org/report/2007/09/11/no-easy-answers/sex-offender-laws-us>) *Human Rights Watch*
- Sex Offender Laws May Do More Harm Than Good (<https://www.hrw.org/news/2007/09/11/us-sex-offender-laws-may-do-more-harm-good>) *Human Rights Watch*

Litigation:

- Does v. Snyder (www.opn.ca6.uscourts.gov/opinions.pdf/16a0207p-06.pdf) *United States Court of Appeals*
- Gundy v. United States (https://www.supremecourt.gov/oral_arguments/argument_transcripts/2018/17-6086_9o11.pdf) *Supreme Court of the United States*
- Packingham v. United States (https://www.supremecourt.gov/opinions/16pdf/15-1194_0811.pdf) *Supreme Court of the United States*
- Millard v. Rankin (mediaassets.thedenverchannel.com/document/2017/09/01/millard_knight_vega_v_colorado_65483340_ver1.0.pdf?_ga=2.10036786.660078815.1545442437-1134973825.1545442437) *United States District Court for the District of Colorado*
- Alabama judgment (<https://reason.com/2019/02/13/sex-offenders-are-not-second-class-citiz/>) *United States District Court in Alabama*
- Indiana Judgment (<https://www.theindianalawyer.com/articles/50120-th-circuit-rules-doc-sex-offender-program-violates-constitution>) *The 7th Circuit Court of Appeals*

Organizations:

- Alliance for Constitutional Sex Offense Laws <https://all4consolaws.org>
- Citizens United for the Reform of Errants (CURE) www.curenational.org/index.ph
- Fight Adam Walsh Act <https://fightawa.org>
- International Institute for Restorative Practices www.iirp.edu/
- Just Future Project ajustfuture.org/home/
- Justice Policy Institute www.justicepolicy.org/index.html
- Legal Reform for People Intellectually and Developmentally Disabled <https://lridd.org>
- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children www.missingkids.org/home
- Prison Fellowship International Centre for Justice and Reconciliation <https://pfi.org/>
- Registrant Tag (Right to Travel) registranttag.org
- Restorative Justice Online www.restorativejustice.org/
- The Sentencing Project www.sentencingproject.org
- Sex Offender Solutions & Education Network (SOSEN) sosen.org
- United States Sentencing Commission <https://www.ussc.gov>

 **Are we going to continue to allow our fear to overrule our common sense and dignity?** 

WOMEN AGAINST REGISTRY

FAQ's

Q: Is W.A.R. against all legislation that falls short of abolishing the registry?

A: No. We strongly believe that the sex offender registries across this nation should be abolished. However, we understand that achieving this goal may be a long process made up of multiple smaller steps along the way. We applaud any judicial and penal reform that moves us in the right direction.

Q: Will W.A.R. be willing to help me with advice about legal issues, housing, probation etc.?

A: We are a grassroots advocacy organization. We have vast amounts of empathy for families who are being stigmatized by law enforcement officials, the judicial system, the penal system, employers, landlords, the public at large and others. However, we do not have legal, housing, employment, therapy or other professionals on staff and cannot give such advice or make such recommendations. We do provide a suicide hotline number when we believe a caller is in danger.

Q: Are you a nationwide organization?

A: Yes. We are headquartered in Missouri but we have several affiliates in other states and members in virtually every state across the country.

Q: If I decide to join W.A.R. as a paying member, what will I receive for my membership?

A: We have several very affordable membership levels. Certain state members will receive email notifications about especially progressive or regressive legislation; members will be notified about potential Support Group meetings in their areas; and members will receive our periodic newsletter. But please understand that we are all in this fight together. We all desire a better life for our families. So, the truth is, that your best take-away from W.A.R. membership, is the satisfaction that you are helping a cause that needs your help; and the knowledge that you have taken the first step to advocating on your own behalf, or on behalf of your loved one. This is the greatest gift you could give or receive.

Q: I don't speak very well or very professionally. I have never spoken to my legislators or even to a small group of people. With this lack of skill, how can I help this cause?

A: This is a common concern. But the truth is that if you write to your legislator from the heart and with respect, we believe that most times, that message comes through loud and clear. If you want to go to the capitol and meet with your state or federal legislators, it might be possible to have a W.A.R. member in your state meet you there for your first visit. A little bit of coaching and a little bit of bravery will take you a long way.

Q: How big is your organization and how long has it been around?

A: W.A.R. is a National non-profit organization that was formed in 2011 by its current President, Vicki Henry. We currently have six Directors on our Board and more than 700 members nation-wide.

Q: Is Women Against Registry only open to female members?

A: No. We are open to all. In fact, three of W.A.R.'s Directors are men. When the organization was founded, the name was a respectful nod to the mothers, girlfriends, wives, sisters and daughters of so many who were required to register. We have considered changing the name over the years but do not wish to lose the name-recognition that we have built-up over time.

Q: What would you say to victims (or family members of victims) who think that sex offenders cannot be cured and so, it is logical to have them permanently removed from society?

A: First, we believe that such a question is born of fear or anger. There are many scientific studies highlighting low recidivism rates, and those highlighting lower-still rates when the perpetrator has gone through a therapy program. Second, there are many who have the "sex offender" label that have committed non-violent, non-contact internet crimes. If proper risk-assessment tools are developed and used, not only for those having committed sex offenses, but for all crime categories, then we could safely bring many ex-offenders back into society and lower our punitive, costly incarceration rates.

Q: If there was ever a group that deserved our contempt, it would be those that commit crimes against innocent children. How can you argue this point?

A: We would suggest that there is no broad segment of society that deserves such sweeping indignation and loathing as that which is typically reserved for those with sex offenses. If someone breaks the law, whether it be a sex-related statute or otherwise, they must then pay the consequences. That debt is a term of incarceration typically followed by a term of probation or parole. At this point in time, most ex-prisoners are given the opportunity to rebuild some semblance of a life, to participate as a member of the community, and to atone for their transgressions. Those who have committed sex offenses are held to a different standard. This different standard is based on fear and ignorance; it is based on some unhealthy desire to punish; and it is based on made-up statistics and outright lies. The term "sex offender" is itself a perfect example of the severe bias directed at this particular class of former lawbreakers. For virtually any other group, criminal or otherwise, large portions of our population would rail against such a one-size-fits-all mentality. It would be called out as unfair, and cruel. In fact, several examples of this kind of behavior are akin to the very worst human treatment in our society's history: the enslavement of Africans and the three centuries of horrific treatment that followed; the systematic murder of six million Jews in WWII by the Nazis, and the methodical theft of land and culture from Native Americans at the hands of European settlers. These and other examples too numerous to mention, had one thing in common; the tyrannical, oppressive segment of society saw only one thing behind the face of these individuals. They saw only the broad-brush characteristics of a one-size-fits-all lie. They saw no individuality, no redeeming qualities, and no humanity. This too is the case for those previously convicted of sex crimes.

Q: Sex offenders are all the same. Why should we have any sympathy for them?

A: You may already know that the “sex offender” label includes violent offenders such as forceable rapists, child molesters, or pedophiles. But did you also know that the very same label refers to those picked up in a non-violent, non-contact, entrapment-like sting operations? Did you know it includes those who were falsely accused but never-the-less coerced into taking a plea bargain with the use of fear tactics by authorities? Did you know it includes Romeo and Juliet teen lovers in many states after one of them passes the magic age of adulthood? Did you know that it includes some who were caught urinating or streaking in public? Did you know it includes children as young as 8 and 10 years old? This is not a one-size-fits-all problem and it certainly does not have a one-size-fits-all solution.

Q: Why would you try to abolish the registry. As a law-abiding citizen, don't I have the right to know if there is a sex offender living next door to me?

A: With all due respect, we do not believe that anyone has that right. We don't believe this any more than we believe you should have the right to know the location of anyone who has committed any crime, especially after they have paid their debt to society. Furthermore, numerous scientific studies have conclusively shown that sex offender registries do *not* lower the incidents of sex crimes and they most certainly do *not* make neighborhoods safer.

Q: I don't want a sex offender living too close to where my children go to school. What is W.A.R.'s stance on residency restrictions?

A: We are vehemently opposed to all residency restrictions because they have not been proven to reduce sex crimes or to increase safety in any way; but they have been proven to disrupt the lives of those who are trying to re-integrate into society in a peaceful productive manner. These restrictions often force families to be separated; or force those who must register into homelessness. An increased population of homeless, unemployed, destabilized individuals is not safe for anyone.

Q: I understand why you don't want a public registry, but isn't a law-enforcement-only registry ok?



A: Abolishing the public registry in favor of a law-enforcement-only registry would be a huge step in the right direction. It would remove much of the stigma surrounding the families of those forced to register. It would take away the open invitation to vigilante crimes against these families. As an organization, we would applaud such a change in our laws. However, the work opposing a law-enforcement registry would continue because those required to register have already paid their debt to society with lengthy terms of incarceration; they would still be forced to register at their own expense, possibly in a public venue; they would still be responsible for any associated costs, like polygraphs; they would still be subject to residency and loitering restrictions around schools, parks, daycare facilities etc.; they would still be bound by Halloween rules; and they would still be subjected to the prejudice of some law enforcement officers.

Q: Besides rallying for or against legislation, how do W.A.R. members advocate?

A: Women Against Registry has been and will continue to be involved in numerous advocacy efforts over and above our legislative endeavors which include writing, calling or visiting our legislators, testifying, being a party to litigation efforts, supporting efforts to write new legislation and more. But in addition to the legislative side of our concerns, we have hosted two national conferences in St. Louis where we heard many great speakers, learned much about our advocacy, and networked with lots of smart, concerned people. We maintain a national website, several state websites, and other social media platforms. We produce a periodic newsletter; we have attended, spoken, and displayed at the conferences of various other organizations; we have created podcasts; and we have spoken on radio talk shows. Recently, we have begun to emphasize the power of story-telling to include a training podcast and the telling of emotional, compelling stories; telling them with the written word, on audio recording, and on video files. It is our goal to gather these stories and database them for future use. Those possible uses include presenting a pertinent story in court or at a legislative hearing, as a presentation at a conference or professional gathering, or as therapy for those who are feeling scared and alone in this massive system of injustice.

Q: How many people in this country have to register?

A: According to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, as of December 21, 2018, there are 917,771 men, women, and children required to register in the United States and its territories. There are 912,643 within the 50 states of the union.

 **Does a false sense of security make us safer....
or does it put us in more danger?** 

WOMEN AGAINST REGISTRY

Testimonials

My association with Women Against Registry has been just one facet of my professional concerns with weaknesses of our judicial system and the nightmares that plague our penal system. The excessively harsh incarceration imposed upon those who are found guilty of accessing child pornography on the internet, without regard for the offender's psychological state, is one of our nation's most egregious moral blind spots. I am deeply grateful for the advocacy of Women Against the Registry in providing networking, information distribution, and advocacy for much needed reform in this arena. Sex crimes frighten us and we give ourselves license to despise those associated with child porn beyond all rational bounds of deliberation. We need organizations such as Women Against Registry to call elected officials, the clergy, journalists, and voters to a much more rational and compassionate view of this social challenge.

Dr. Roger L. Ray
Pastor, The Emerging Church
spfccc.org

I have been fighting for change and fair laws for the last 12 years and over the course of that time I have worked with many advocacy groups. Being a long-standing member of Women Against the Registry (WAR) I have had the privilege of watching it grow, evolve and mature and under Vicki Henry's leadership, become a powerhouse among groups fighting for civil and human rights. WAR stands out among all the other groups with a fearlessness that will not be stopped. There is no lawmaker that they won't contact and no meeting they are too timid to attend. They demand answers to questions that are often hard to ask of our elected officials. They stand up and represent a group of citizens that society would rather forget and they fight tooth and nail for them every single day. I am proud to be a part of that.

Laurie Jones

I attended and spoke at a WAR conference and learned so much about how the public Sex Offender Registry isn't making kids any safer -- literally, it is not doing what we think it is -- even as it is actively destroying families long after their loved one has served his time. There has got to be a better way!

Lenore Skenazy
President of [Let Grow](#)
Founder of the Free-Range Kids movement (and [book!](#))
And heck, here I am on [The Daily Show](#)

I have been associated with Women Against Registry for approximately two years. In that time, I have attended two national conferences in Saint Louis Missouri. Each conference was educational with a variety of interesting speakers. I learned a lot. Initially, I was unsure about what I was getting involved with. I wasn't sure what the organization was all about. But very quickly, I found out that these folks are very passionate about helping all people. Every WAR member that I met cares about justice and families. They want everyone to have a second chance; they believe everyone should be allowed to become a contributing members of society. No matter what situation you find yourself in, this organization is worthy of your time. I am glad I became a member.



MWT

WAR has been an important organization in opposing the registration laws that unfairly deprive people who have been convicted of sex or sex related crimes of their constitutional rights. These laws were enacted without any research that supports the need for their existence. WAR is a voice that needs to be publicly heard and is consistent with the language in the opinion of Does v. Snyder, Federal Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals. That case states, in part, that the registration system in Michigan serves no public interest while being very harmful to registrants. But for WAR, these truths would not be self-evident.

Larry Dubin
Professor of Law
University of Detroit Mercy

I became aware of this organization about a year ago. I am glad such an organization exists that cares about the rights of sex offenders and their family members. That these laws inflict punishment on innocent family members and impede the rehabilitation of the offender is quite apparent, and this organization addresses these issue. Thanks for all the good work you do.

John M

 **Is it possible that there is a better way to deal with this problem than to identify almost one million of our fellow citizens on a hurtful, dangerous, and punitive registry?** 

WOMEN AGAINST REGISTRY

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Phone: 800-311-3764

Website: <https://www.womenagainstregistry.org>

Facebook: Women Against Registry

Twitter: @WomenAgainstReg

LinkedIn: Families of Registrants

**Protecting innocent children is a value to us all;
but we are currently witnessing a tidal wave of
sex offense punishment at any cost;
it is enveloping everyone;
it has swallowed up children and the elderly;
it has taken down prominent professionals;
it has taken out famous actors;
it has toppled long-standing politicians;
it has ruined the lives of powerful people;
and it is splitting up loving families;
it knows no bounds;
If you think this issue cannot touch your family,
you are mistaken.**

