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NARSOL Calls Out Patch: STOP the Red Dots!

“Red-dotting” sex offender homes at Halloween feeds baseless hysteria

Raleigh, North Carolina | September 22, 2020—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](#))

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR RATIONAL SEXUAL OFFENSE LAWS

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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.”

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.

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One Standard of Justice (Connecticut) – co-sponsor

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#

NARSOL is the nation's largest civil rights organization advocating on behalf of registered citizens and their families. NARSOL opposes dehumanizing registries and works to eliminate discrimination, banishment, and vigilantism against persons accused or convicted of sexual offenses through the use of impact litigation, public education, legislative advocacy, and media outreach in order to reintegrate and reconcile affected individuals and restore their constitutional rights.