



<http://finance.senate.gov>
Press_Office@finance-rep.senate.gov

For Immediate Release
Monday, July 2, 2007

Grassley Seeks State Department Assistance to Deter Child Sex Tourism

WASHINGTON — Sen. Chuck Grassley today urged the Secretary of State to use the authority of the State Department against foreign travel by registered sex offenders for the purpose of committing additional sex crimes against children or others and for gathering more information from other countries about predators who come into the United States from abroad.

In a letter sent today, Grassley stressed the importance of information sharing and transparency between nations in order to prevent further access and entry of abusive criminals. He specifically suggested that the State Department consider requiring registered sex offenders to identify themselves on their passport applications and to further identify them as such on any passport issued to them. He also said that the U.S. and foreign customs systems could be used to disclose whether an individual entering a country has a history of sexually abusing children.

The text of Grassley's letter to Secretary of State Condoleeza Rice follows here.

July 2, 2007

The Honorable Condoleeza Rice
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

As a senior member of the United States Senate, I have been an outspoken advocate for the rights of children to be free from all forms of abuse. Just last year, I was an original cosponsor of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act of 2006, which has been called the most important piece of child protection legislation of the last 25 years. This victory aside, the Adam Walsh Act did not address the problem of sexual predators that travel outside the country to abuse children, commonly referred to as child sex tourism.

Recently, your office released the seventh annual Trafficking in Persons Report, as required by the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000 (PL 106-386). This report recognizes the global problem of sex tourism and sex trafficking, noting that each year more than one million children are exploited in the global commercial sex trade. Further, according to UNICEF, there are more than 1 million child prostitutes in Asia alone. These numbers are staggering, and as you have stated, the President has committed the U.S. Government to “lead in combating this serious 21st century challenge, and all nations that are resolved to end human trafficking have a strong partner in the United States.”

That said, I have been examining ways to prevent convicted sex offenders from engaging in foreign travel for illicit purposes. The ability to exclude convicted sex offenders from eligibility to receive a passport, or to clearly mark their U.S. passports to indicate that they are registered sex offenders, are potential ways to deter international sex crimes.

On March 22, 2007, I wrote a letter to Michael Wilson, Canadian Ambassador to the United States, stressing the importance of bilateral sharing of information (see Attachment 1). My letter highlighted a troubling statement on the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) website. According to that website, Canadian authorities were not sharing information in the Canadian national sex offender registry with the U.S. Given that all U.S. sex offender registry information is publicly available for Canadian use, the RCMP’s statement suggested that information sharing on this issue was not a two-way street.

In response, Ambassador Wilson noted that the RCMP would consider individual requests for information from the U. S. for any sexually related offense mentioned in its registry, provided that there are reasonable grounds to believe that a Canadian is involved. However, this sort of limited sharing does not allow for systematic screening of travelers across our shared border. In order to do that, U.S. officials would need the same sort of unfettered access to all the data that we provide to everyone through full, public access. Despite this difference of opinion on information sharing, Ambassador Wilson agreed that the statement on the RCMP website was inappropriate and indicated that it would be removed (see Attachment 2).

As you may also know, on May 11, 2007, an unidentified tipster enabled Canadian authorities to arrest Richard Steven Goldberg, who was posted on the Federal Bureau of Investigation’s (FBI) “Ten Most Wanted” list in 2002 for alleged crimes against children. In early July 2001, the Long Beach California Police department began an investigation after six neighborhood kids reported being sexually assaulted by Goldberg at his residence. The police seized his computer from his residence. In early July 2001, after finding evidence of child pornography and Goldberg himself engaged in alleged sex acts with children on his computer, police issued an arrest warrant. The police determined that Goldberg immediately fled to his parents’ residence in New Jersey to avoid being arrested. Goldberg’s whereabouts were unknown after that. Although this incident did not involve a convicted sex offender, it underscores the ease with which predators can travel internationally without much fear of detection by government authorities. Real-time information is necessary for border authorities to determine whether they should admit an individual seeking entry.

In reviewing the current state of the law, I asked the Library of Congress, Congressional

Research Service (CRS) to prepare a memo on whether your office has the discretion to require registered sex offenders to identify themselves on their passport applications and to further identify them as such on any passport issued to them. CRS concluded that you currently have the authority to require identification of sex offenders on passports issued by the State Department. I have enclosed a copy of the CRS opinion report for your review.

I know that as the President's chief advisor in matters related to the formulation and implementation of United States foreign policy, you appreciate the importance of ensuring that registered sex offenders are not traveling abroad for the purpose of committing additional sex crimes against children or other individuals. I know further that you recognize the importance of knowing about predators that come into our country from abroad. Additionally, I believe that an effort to alert other nations that sexual predators may actively engage in such behavior within their borders may be viewed by them as a further gesture of diplomatic good will. Accordingly, please provide detailed written responses to the following:

- (1) What is the State Department's current policy with regard to issuing passports to individuals convicted of a sex crime?
- (2) Has the State Department previously considered restricting the issuance of U.S. Passports to individuals convicted of a sex crime? If so, please describe.
- (3) Has the State Department previously considered marking or otherwise identifying U.S. issued passports of those who are currently listed on a sexual offender registry as required by state or federal law? If not, is such a process feasible? Why or why not?
- (4) Do you believe that current regulations which allow you to deny or revoke a passport when you determine, "that the national's activities abroad are causing or are likely to cause serious damage to the national security or the foreign policy of the United States" provide you the authority to restrict passports to convicted sex offenders or sex traffickers? Why or why not?
- (5) Has the State Department conducted or commissioned any study to determine how many American citizens may travel outside the United States for sex tourism? If yes, please provide any such studies. If no, are any planned?
- (6) Do you believe that Congress should pass legislation expressly granting you the authority to deny passports to convicted sex traffickers similar to legislation that currently allows you to deny passports to convicted drug traffickers? Why or why not?
- (7) Would you please describe any ongoing efforts by other nations to identify sexual predators entering our borders, if any?

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention and valuable feedback relating to this important matter. I look forward to your reply by no later than July 16, 2007.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley
United States Senator

Enclosure

Attachment 1- Senator Grassley letter dated March 22, 2007

Attachment 2- Ambassador Wilson letter dated April 5, 2007