



**Testimony of Grier Weeks  
Executive Director  
National Association to Protect Children**

**Hearing on Sex Crimes and the Internet: Danger is Just a Click Away**

**Before the Committee on the Judiciary**

**U.S. House of Representatives,  
Honorable John Conyers, Chairman**

**October 17, 2007**

Chairman Conyers, Ranking member Smith, distinguished members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Grier Weeks, executive director of the National Association to Protect Children, or PROTECT. PROTECT was established in 2002 as a grassroots membership association that works to promote legislation with one exclusive aim: child protection. We work primarily in state legislatures to win stronger laws for child protection, and last year helped secure greater funding for law enforcement to combat child exploitation in California, Tennessee and North Carolina. For the past two years, we have done extensive research into the magnitude of the problem nationally and what law enforcement at all levels of government needs to combat this crisis.

You are hearing today from some of the foremost experts on child exploitation in the United States. When it comes to data on the nature, scale and magnitude of child pornography trafficking, there is not even a close second to ICAC Agent Flint Waters. In the FBI's Arnold Bell, you have a seasoned veteran who has spent years at the very center of national and international anti-child exploitation law enforcement efforts.

I will confine my testimony, therefore, to the one set of facts that Congress urgently needs but has not been given during previous legislative hearings on this subject: a frank assessment of the state of readiness of our federal, state and local law enforcement agencies to combat this epidemic.

Hundreds of Thousands of Predators are at Large

Let me begin by reviewing what we know about the magnitude of this crisis. First, we know that there are hundreds of thousands of individuals within the United States who are actively engaged in child pornography crimes. Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher gave this testimony to the House Energy and Commerce Committee in 2006<sup>1</sup>. Agent Flint Waters, the primary architect of the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) information-sharing network and the one person who has compiled the most data on trafficking, estimates there are at least 350,000 such criminal offenders within the U.S.<sup>2</sup>.

Hundreds of Thousands of Child Victims

Second, we also know these individuals are responsible for hundreds of thousands of child victims, whether of child pornography production or other forms of direct sexual assault. FBI Cyber Crimes Division Chief Raul Roldan gave this testimony to Congress in 2006<sup>3</sup>. Both research and anecdotal evidence tell us that a majority of those arrested for so-called "simple possession" of child pornography are known to have sexually assaulted children or attempted to<sup>4</sup>. Most of these children are preyed upon not by strangers, but by adults in their own daily circle of trust. Child pornography in the U.S. is largely a home-grown, cottage industry.

### Millions of Crimes, A Multi-Billion Dollar Market

The third important fact we know is that these hundreds of thousands of individuals commit *millions of crimes* each year<sup>5</sup>. This distinction between offenders and crimes is not an academic one, because the volume of crimes being committed is our best indicator of the crushing market demand for new "product." This is a market estimated to range in the billions of dollars annually<sup>6</sup>, although it also thrives on barter. This demand drives the rape and torture of more American children every day.

### We Can Prevent This

Finally, perhaps the most important thing we know is that we can prevent this. Thanks to the innovative high tech investigations of the ICACs and federal agencies, law enforcement can now locate tens of thousands of the predators referred to by Ms. Fisher, Mr. Roldan and Agent Waters. In one recent 30-day period, the ICAC Data Network gathered evidence on individuals trafficking in child pornography from nearly 50,000 unique locations<sup>7</sup>. These criminals are now caught in a web of their own making.

### Only a Token Percentage Interdicted

If there were hundreds of thousands of active bank robbers at large in the United States, we might declare a national state of emergency. But these are just children. Only token number of these crimes will ever be investigated. Law enforcement agencies at the federal, state and local level are overwhelmed and are triaging<sup>8</sup>.

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, in the six and a half year period between FY 2001 and mid-2007, "the number of suspects identified and arrested by the FBI for online child exploitation" crimes was 5,048<sup>9</sup>. The ICAC program, comprised of 46 task forces nationwide, reports just over 2,000 arrests nationwide in FY '06<sup>10</sup>. We do not know of reliable numbers from Immigration and Customs Enforcement or the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, but they would be smaller than either the FBI's or the ICAC networks'.

### Law Enforcement Agencies Starved for Funding

All of this is no fault of the heroes who work at the FBI, ICE, U.S. Postal Inspection Service and the ICAC Network.

As of July 11<sup>th</sup>, the FBI's Innocent Images National Initiative, based in Calverton, Maryland, had just 32 staff, including 13 agents. Previous Congressional testimony by the Bureau has emphasized the total number of full-time equivalents assigned to child exploitation cases agency-wide, which is around 260<sup>11</sup>. But it is important that Congress understands the grossly inadequate size of this unit itself.

The Innocent Images Congressional appropriation in FY '06 was \$10 million. That's less than the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development gave to Jersey City, New Jersey last year for housing and community development<sup>12</sup>. The FBI supplemented this with approximately \$23 million in discretionary funds.

In FY '06, the budget for the entire Internet Crimes Against Children task force program, which has been tremendously successful, was \$14.5 million<sup>13</sup>. After years of administration neglect and mounting Congressional scrutiny, the Department of Justice finally doubled funding for this program in 2007. However, funding for this bridge to safety for children is still less than one-fourth the federal investment in Alaska's infamous "Bridge to Nowhere" (Gravina Island project)<sup>14</sup>.

Law enforcement also suffers from a critical lack of computer forensic resources. No FBI lab is dedicated to crimes against children, and agents at all levels of government report typical wait times for forensic work of around 8 months. This bottleneck not only limits prosecution, but it often leaves victims in danger while authorities wait for evidence.

### Time for a Change of Policy in Washington

How is any of this possible? How—in a nation where not a single night goes by without a television show or newscast on the topic of “sex offenders”—can a flourishing criminal marketplace prey on American children with such impunity? I will conclude by offering our insight into this question.

It was just 1996, eleven years ago, that the world wide web took off, facilitating what would become a vast new online marketplace for child exploitation. Nineteen ninety-six was also the same year that Megan’s Law was enacted, facilitating a decade of public awareness about child sexual abuse.

Megan’s Law—which imposed a form of citizen supervision on released sex offenders—was enormously popular, far cheaper than intensive surveillance and control by parole or probation officers, and irresistible to the news media. It quickly became a virtual paradigm for how America would think about, talk about and legislate about child sexual abuse. And although “registration” was a surprisingly weak response to the problem, it was the wellspring for a decade-long flood of often-partisan “get tough” rhetoric.

Meanwhile, as the decade wore on, child pornography trafficking exploded exponentially. Children became a commodity in a new underground economy, and law enforcement began to fall farther behind. Those on the front lines were not given the basic personnel, equipment, training, forensic labs or other support they needed to protect American children.

Year after year, the administration talked tough, but refused to support law enforcement, even in the face of an unfolding domestic human rights catastrophe. Year after year, the administration failed to even shoot straight with Congress about the magnitude of the problem law enforcement was seeing and to ask for meaningful budget increases. Finally, in 2006, Rep. Joe Barton practically begged the Department of Justice in a public hearing to ask Congress for more help combating child exploitation, to no avail<sup>15</sup>.

By the end of the Megan’s Law decade, America ended up with an enormous surplus of rhetoric about sex offenders and a severe deficit of resources to do anything about them. We were spending millions hunting for ex-offenders who failed to register their addresses, while ignoring legions of new sexual predators whose locations we *know*. We were doing the things that cost the least and sound the toughest, while neglecting the things that cost real money and could save the most lives.

Now, the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress has the opportunity to do what the 109<sup>th</sup>, and this administration, did not: Fight back. Pay what it costs. Disrupt this market. Go get these children.

You have the opportunity to show how America, and 50 state legislatures, a little less talk and a lot more action. You can launch the toughest offensive against child sexual predators this nation has ever seen, as well as the largest child abuse prevention campaign in history. Millions of American taxpayers from all walks of life will be behind you 100 percent.