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**Remarks by Vernon M. Keenan**  
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**On HR 5464**

I am here today as Director of the Georgia Bureau of Investigation and as the representative of all Georgia law enforcement to urge your support for *A Child is Missing*. The absolute priority of the GBI is the investigation of violent crimes against children. As a statewide agency, we work each day with the nearly six hundred police and sheriffs departments in Georgia in their efforts to protect children. I believe that Georgia's success with *A Child Is Missing* represents the experience of law enforcement agencies in the United States.

Georgia implemented *A Child Is Missing* in 2003 and our law enforcement officers have received training on the use of this simple but, valuable program. Since its adoption in Georgia, *A Child Is Missing* has assisted in the recovery of many children. We consider this program to be an excellent example of a public and private non-profit partnership with a proven record of success.

Georgia law enforcement routinely uses both the *A Child Is Missing* and the *Amber Alert* systems. We were the fourth state to implement *A Child Is Missing* and also the fourth state to establish an *Amber Alert* system.

*A Child Is Missing* and *Amber Alert* are two separate and distinct child recovery systems, but they mutually support and enhance each other. Both systems engage

citizens to aid law enforcement in the search for and recovery of children who are in danger. Georgia has extensive experience in using both systems.

*A Child Is Missing* sends telephone alerts to the community when a child, elderly or disabled person is missing. The recorded telephone message contains a detailed physical description of the missing person and is directed to a specific neighborhood or community.

The *Amber Alert* uses the Emergency Alert System to interrupt radio and television programming with electronic and voice messages when a child has been abducted. Additionally, the Department of Transportation message boards display a description of the suspect vehicle.

Because *Amber Alert* is a voluntary partnership between law enforcement and the broadcast industry, there are specific requirements for its use and there are established protocols to be followed before activation.

*Amber Alert* is activated when a child is criminally abducted and is believed to be in imminent danger. Further, there must be enough descriptive information about the abduction to believe that a media broadcast will assist in the child's recovery. *Amber Alert* has limited applications while *A Child Is Missing* has great flexibility.

Both systems are extremely valuable resources in the protection of children, but they have several differences:

*Amber Alert* can be used only when there is a criminal abduction of a child, while *A Child Is Missing* is used to search for lost or missing children as well as abductions. *A Child Is Missing* can also be used to search for the elderly or the disabled. *Amber Alert* operates within a very structured process which requires local law enforcement agencies

to seek approval and activation at the state level. *A Child Is Missing* can be activated by the first police officer or deputy sheriff who responds to the scene of a missing person.

*Amber Alert* is most effective when there is a suspect vehicle description to give to the public. *A Child Is Missing* gives a targeted segment of the community a detailed physical description of the missing person, their clothing, location where they became missing and other relevant information. Additionally *A Child Is Missing* may request that neighbors search their grounds for the missing person.

When the GBI activates *Amber Alert* we recommend that investigators also seek assistance from *A Child Is Missing*. Since 2002, Georgia has activated *Amber Alert* for 69 abductions. We also denied 60 cases because the incidents did not meet the required criteria. In each of the denied cases, law enforcement officers were referred to *A Child Is Missing* for assistance. *A Child Is Missing* serves to fill the “gap” in endangered children cases when *Amber Alert* is not available.

We train Georgia law enforcement officers to use *A Child Is Missing* when they respond to a missing person incident. The system can provide public safety personnel with substantial savings in time and money in these type cases. *A Child Is Missing* plays a critical role in law enforcement’s efforts to protect our children.

As Director of the GBI and as the representative of all Georgia law enforcement, I urge your support for *A Child is Missing*.