



NEWS

from the Illinois Senate
State Senator Michael Bond

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FOR MORE INFORMATION
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Jasmine's Law Increases Penalties for Sex Offenders

SPRINGFIELD, IL— State Sen. Michael Bond (D-Grayslake) sponsored two bills that passed the Illinois Senate this week, increasing penalties for sexually-violent persons.

Senate Bill 1020, known as “Jasmine’s Law”, adds alcohol as a “factor in aggravation” to the Code of Corrections. The bill is specifically aimed at crimes where the victim was a minor and was offered or under the influence of alcohol at the time the offense was committed. The use of alcohol to “groom” children to eventually engage them in sexual activities is a common practice among sexually-violent persons. Part of this process can involve intoxicating victims either voluntarily or involuntarily to reduce their awareness or resistance to the assault. Alcohol is the most commonly used drug during sexual assaults. 50-75% of all sexual assaults involves alcohol or drug use by perpetrators or victims. Under Bond’s bill, the addition of alcohol as a “factor in aggravation” gives judges the discretion to double the sentence length of individuals found guilty of these crimes.

Bond’s legislation stems from a constituent in his district. In 2001, Jasmine became a victim of sexual assault at the age of 11, when an adult provided her with alcohol and preyed on her while she was rendered incapacitated. At the time of prosecution, the State of Illinois had no legal standing to add alcohol as a factor in aggravation to predatory criminal sexual assault. Therefore, her offender received a plea deal for the minimum sentence of only 6 years.

“We want to ensure that individuals who are involved in these heinous acts are subject to the harshest treatment under the law,” Bond said. “Prior to this legislation, the penalty for using alcohol to groom a minor was not much more than a slap on the wrist; now it will be a felony, the equivalent of using narcotics. Doubling the prison sentencing will put these criminals behind bars where they belong and serve as a deterrent to others who are considering similar actions.”

Since the time of the assault, Jasmine and her mother, Denise Rotheimer, have become community advocates to raise awareness and provide resources for victims and survivors.

“I reached out to Senator Bond to strengthen the current law and implement policy that will protect victims who have been sexually assaulted while under the influence of alcohol,” said Rotheimer. I am grateful for his efforts to get the bill passed in the Senate. Now my daughter can

rest knowing that other victims will have the protection under the law that she did not have at the time she was sexually assaulted.”

Senate Bill 3467 was also passed unanimously out of the Senate this week. This legislation builds additional safeguards into the Sexually Violent Persons Commitment Act (SVPA).

Under current law, when a sex offender becomes eligible for release he or she must be evaluated for commitment under the SVPA. The evaluation is done by the Department of Corrections with the help of expert evaluators. However, if the Department fails to submit the file for review, or the expert retained to review the file concludes that the inmate is not eligible for commitment as a sexually-violent person, the inmate is released. Currently, the only way to prohibit the release is if the Attorney General brings a petition to commit the inmate as a sexually-violent person.

Bond’s bill makes substantial improvements to the current process. These safeguards include allowing the local State’s Attorney to petition for commitment as a sexually-violent person. Often the State’s Attorney was responsible for trying the original case, giving them first hand experience with the inmate and their history. Senate Bill 3467 also prohibits sex offenders whose crimes could qualify for commitment under the SVPA to be eligible for meritorious good time. This prevents release before the offender can be properly evaluated for commitment. Finally, it also prohibits a sex offender released on mandatory supervised parole from residing at the same street address as another registered sex offender.

“This legislation makes our sex offender laws much stronger in Illinois,” Bond said. “More thorough evaluations will lead to more commitments under the Sexually Violent Persons Commitment Act, reducing recidivism and providing greater protection for the citizens of our state.”

Bond is also the chief co-sponsor of Senate Bill 3269 which creates the Sexual Assault Evidence Submission Act. This is groundbreaking legislation that will make Illinois the first state to require the submission of sexual assault evidence for analysis. The bill passed the Senate unanimously today.

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