



KANSAS

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

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Governor's Column: Taking action to make Kansans safer

The following is a column by Governor Kathleen Sebelius:

The primary responsibility of government is to provide for the protection of its citizens, particularly our most vulnerable Kansans, and I'm proud to say we have made real progress this year in making our streets and neighborhoods safer.

Last year, the Legislature and I teamed up to pass a law making it harder for meth makers to get the ingredients needed for this deadly drug. That was a real victory for Kansas, because we've seen the number of meth labs in our state cut by nearly half.

This year, our focus is on stopping those criminals who perpetrate some of the most horrible crimes imaginable: sex offenses, particularly against children.

Starting in 2003, and again in my State of the State address in January, I called on the Legislature to increase penalties for these dangerous criminals. I also proposed a measure to provide law enforcement officers with new tools to track the movements of repeat offenders who have served their prison time.

This week, the Legislature passed a bill known as Jessica's Law, which cracks down on criminals who prey on children by imposing tougher, longer prison sentences. First time offenders, for example, will receive a minimum 25-year prison sentence, with penalties increasing to the point that third-time offenders will never have another chance to harm a child, since they'll spend the rest of their lives in prison with no possibility of parole.

These new sentences are complimented by my proposal, now law, to use electronic tracking devices to keep track of the movements of second-time child sex offenders who are released into communities. This was a priority for me because it gives law enforcement officers a new tool to protect Kansas children.

At the same time as we're protecting children, action is being taken to protect other vulnerable Kansans from abuse. A new investigative unit in the attorney general's office will be formed to investigate and prosecute cases of abuse against disabled Kansans. That's another step forward in our efforts to protect vulnerable Kansans.

These actions are all designed to make Kansans safer, and I applaud the cooperation that went into making these protections a reality.

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