

# Sex Offender Registry Review A Tricky Task

By **Editorial**

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**C**onnecticut's sex offender registry was created in 1998 to protect the public. Does it work?

A committee of the Connecticut Sentencing Commission hopes to answer that question in the next 30 months as it reviews the state's laws and policies relating to sex offenders. "This is not an easy topic," said committee co-Chairman Robert Farr, former chairman of the Connecticut Board of Pardons and Paroles.

That is an understatement.

The registry has more than 6,000 names on it. Critics have long argued that many if not most of those on the list pose no danger to the public, and that keeping such a large list makes it difficult for police to monitor or for residents to distinguish low-risk offenders from predators who may pose a threat.

Along with some rapists and pedophiles, the registry has an array of voyeurs, porn possessors and people who had sex with an underage partner. Registrants are listed by the crime they were convicted of, but it's not clear whether a conviction for "risk of injury" or "third-degree sexual assault" means the person is a danger to others.

For low-risk offenders who have served their sentences, the additional burden of public humiliation can be devastating. Many find it difficult to find jobs or homes; some suffer threats or physical harm. They are citizens with rights.

Connecticut does differentiate between violent and nonviolent offenders in one sense; the former stay on the registry for life, the latter for 10 years, in general. There are other options: The science of risk assessment has advanced since 1998; some states use assessment techniques to determine who is likely to commit another crime and should be on the list. Some states, such as New Jersey, create tiers of offenders and make the names of low-risk offenders available only to the police.

This is an emotional and politically charged issue. Protection of the public is paramount. The sentencing commission has done some fine work to date on juvenile sentencing; this will be a tougher challenge.

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