

# RATIONAL REFORM

2023 PARSOL ANNUAL



PARSOL

twisted

## THE ^ROAD TO RATIONAL REFORM LAWS IN PENNSYLVANIA

**PLUS:** Honoring PARSOL Founder Theresa Robertson, Ph.D.  
Person First Language in the Rational Reform Movement  
Legal, Legislative, and Public Policy Updates  
and more!



# WE NEED YOU TO SPEAK UP!

PARSOL Advocates needs you to meet with your legislator and tell them you want comprehensive criminal justice reforms of Pennsylvania's irrational sexual offense laws. We will provide training and work to find a time to go with you!



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# The (Twisted) Road to Rational Sexual Offense Laws in PA

In various fields of study, including addiction treatment, harm prevention, holistic wellness, and criminal justice reform, there are “multiple pathways” to an end goal. During 2023, the Pennsylvania Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws began using this framework to navigate the complicated, often-twisted, and multiple roads to rational sexual offense laws in the Keystone state.

While evaluating our objectives, we observed a host of avenues leading to our destination of reason; but, we also quickly determined that exploring all of them, as a one-hit strategy seemed not only foolhardy but also an ugly reflection of the irrational approach that registry advocates frequently adopt.

The road to rational sexual offense laws may not be a straight line, and we may need to go down different pathways to end up at our ultimate destination, but we are committed to this purpose.

1. *Legal challenges and the courts* - Our legal information committee continues to analyze and work with attorneys/legal professionals as court cases such as *Com. v. Torsilieri* seek to alter or abolish registration requirements in PA.

2. *Legislative advocacy* - Our legislative team continues to build relationships with elected officials and policy makers. Repealing unconstitutional statutes and preventing the invention of future irrational laws are vital undertakings.

3. *Comprehensive education* - Our content group continues to unearth and release new information in an ongoing effort to equip both experts and wider communities with

empirical data useful for countering fabrications and shattering sensationalism.

4. *Public information* - We continue to educate the general public, frequently responding to inquiries, providing insights to media outlets, and expanding our reach on social networking platforms.

5. *Support Groups and Resources* - PARSOL provides a platform for the PA Fearless Group, a 12-step-inspired fellowship for individuals impacted by public registries. We continue to build strategic partnerships with organizations that share our mission, vision, and values across the Commonwealth and around the world.

6. *Re-entry case management* - Coming in 2024, PARSOL will help secure funding and systems to help re-entrants who have a sexual offense on their record connect with housing, employment, education, and community support services.

**Your support of PARSOL as a subscriber, donor, sponsor, strategic partner, and advocate is a fundamental driver as we continue down this winding road. On behalf of the more-than-twenty-thousand persons forced to register (PFRs) in Pennsylvania, their families, loved ones, and advocates... Thank you!**

With your help, we will travel along these pathways -- the twists and turns... and of course a few potholes...

... *It is Pennsylvania, after all!*  
- JD -





# PARSOL Core Values and Mission

## PARSOL's Core Values

Making a Difference - We are committed to making changes that protect Pennsylvania's communities through a rational approach to harm prevention.

Diversity & Inclusion - To reach PARSOL's goals, we embrace inclusion, diversity, equity, and access among all our stakeholders.

Compassion - Our teamwork and collaboration are grounded in the compassion we have for all people and our belief that all persons have inherent dignity and worth.

Fairness & Flexibility - We lead with a diplomatic yet bold approach, steadfast in our pursuit of fair, impartial, and equitable justice for all.

## PARSOL's Core Beliefs Statement

PARSOL believes all sexual abuse is unacceptable and also that prevention, treatment, and healing are possible. We take a person-first approach to criminal justice reform that cultivates a fair and just society, honors inherent dignity, and promotes respect and fairness. People can and do change.

## PARSOL Mission Statement

PARSOL advocates for sexual offense public safety measures and resources that work for all Pennsylvanians through prevention-based, treatment-informed, and healing-focused legislative and public policy initiatives that respect both our Constitution and the dignity of all people.

## PARSOL Strategic Plan Goals - 2023-2024

**GOAL 1:** Cultivate partnerships/collaborations with other organizations and groups that align with our mission, vision, & values.

**GOAL 2:** Build PARSOL's Public Awareness, increasing its public profile, supporter list, membership, and donors. This includes increasing content and the distribution thereof.

**GOAL 3:** Incorporate and involve more professionals in PARSOL's programs and activities, including attorneys, researchers, mental health professionals, re-entry support professionals, etc.

**GOAL 4:** Increase and formalize legislative advocacy work, building on established relationships, excellent communication, and statewide representation, maximizing volunteer activism.

**GOAL 5:** Build and increase more programs and resources for persons affected by irrational sexual offense laws, including PA's Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA).

## PARSOL 2023-2024 Membership Rates

General Membership: \$30 per year

Sustaining Membership: \$5+ per month

Inmate Membership: \$40 (incl. mailing expenses)

Join Online at <https://PARSOL.org> or call 717-820-2237.

## Rational Reform PARSOL Annual 2023

(717) 820-2237

[PARSOL.org](https://PARSOL.org)

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# Beating the Odds.

As I approach the end of my second term as the Chair of the PARSOL Board of Directors and prepare to step down from my role as Executive Director, I am experiencing so many memories and emotions. It is a bitter-sweet time for me. Bitter because in some senses this transition involves loss. I will miss the passionate and meaningful discussions, the good-hearted teasing and inside jokes among the Board members (Jerry – lunch is on you!!), and it has become increasingly evident that I need to adapt to the fact that I'm too old to keep up the pace of my youth or the energies and technological savvy of the younger people who now lead this charge. Sweet because I have had the gift of watching a small band of rag-tag volunteers grow into a viable organization that has the potential to contribute to meaningful change that will not only restore the dignity that every human being deserves to so many but, importantly, will increase the prevention of sexual abuse.



During the first year, the PARSOL Board was told to expect that we would fail, that grassroots non-profits don't usually last for more than 2 years. I get that! It's not easy to work hard with no compensation while still tending to all the responsibilities and challenges of daily life. This group had the added burden of managing probation restrictions and mandates, stressors from polygraphs, limited work, limited housing opportunities, and maneuvering social relationships in the community and at work that were challenging because of the stigma of being on the public registry or the vicarious stigma that comes with being affiliated with an organization that advocates for people on that registry. Let's not forget that even if no one is being paid to do the work it still takes financial

resources for an organization to have an infrastructure (website, telephone, post office box, printing of educational materials, travel for networking with other advocates, training, and meeting with legislators and other stakeholders. Early on, these expenses were all paid out-of-pocket by the people who were doing the work for free. Not many people could sustain that for too long. So, I was not offended when the warnings that PARSOL would not likely survive were made. I was scared because I thought the organization might not survive and it was so sorely needed. Nonetheless, we were not deterred. Some of us even dug our heels in a little deeper to shore ourselves up for the uphill battle to come.

That was in 2018, shortly after PARSOL incorporated and officially became a proud NARSOL affiliate. Now it's 2023 and PARSOL's infrastructure, influence, respect, knowledge-base, networks, membership are all firmly established. That does not mean we are done growing in any of these areas. There is still so much work to be done. It is still an uphill battle. It does mean that those early grassroots efforts were successful and PARSOL beat the odds! At this point, it is no longer about surviving. It is about thriving. Thriving as we move toward accomplishing our mission of continued advocacy for sexual offense public safety measures that work for all citizens of Pennsylvania, public policy that is based on prevention, and laws that respect both our Constitution and the dignity of all people. As I prepare to pass the torch to some of the most committed, talented, and caring people I know, I urge you to consider how you might join them in this important work. Be the change!

Peace,  
Theresa Robertson, Ph.D.  
Chair, PA Association for  
Rational Sexual Offense Laws



## Do you have a few minutes?

That's all it takes to be a PARSOL Advocate. If each one of us gave a few minutes of our spare time to make our voices heard, we could better guide the future of Pennsylvania's SORNA ("Megan's Law") registry and rational sex offense laws in the Commonwealth of Pa.



Always remember that lawmakers and policymakers in Harrisburg work for you. They receive their salaries from the taxes that you pay. Your Senator and Representative are elected to represent, not only the people in their district, but all people of this state... including persons forced to register (PFRs.) The messages that they hear from constituents and advocates influence and guide the way they vote.

We cannot allow lobbyists and loud myth-spreading registry advocates that represent failed policies to be the only ones to have the attention of our Legislators!

So, join us! From setting up an in-person meeting at your legislator's office to sending a quick email or making a phone call, every person who stands up and says "Enough!" to irrational, ineffective, and unconstitutional laws helps move our cause forward: a Pennsylvania that is safe and just for all.

In solidarity,  
Randall Hayes  
Chair, PARSOL Advocates

## Reframing the Conversation

# Using Person-First Language in the Justice Reform Movement



By John Dawe, MNA, CNP, RCP



PARSOL receives letters and calls from people who are on the “sex offender” registry and those prospective registrants. Often these letters and phone calls include statements like, “I am a sex offender,” “My daughter is a sex offender,” “My husband is a sex offender.” News articles, legislative documents and legal documents, and even professional journal articles refer to people who are on the registry or who have been charged with a sex crime as “sex offenders.” The registries themselves are titled, “Sex Offender Registry.” Given the prevalence of the term “sex offender,” it is understandable that it is so widely adopted, even by those of us who are directly affected by this label. At PARSOL, we are committed to person-first language, as it is more accurate and respectful of human dignity to acknowledge the person first and foremost.

Advocates for rational sexual offense laws need to be aware of the tone that they are setting with their choice of words. As our movement covers some sensitive areas that people have strong feelings about, we must always be aware of how we present our case for reform. This article provides examples and why person-first language is important in the movement to pass rational sex offense laws both federally and in all 50 individual states.

### What is person-first language?

Person-first language puts the person before their circumstances and describes

what a person has, not who a person is. Rooted in the ‘disability’ community, person-first language uses phrases such as “person with a disability” or “individuals with disabilities,” as opposed to phrases that identify people based solely on their disability, such as “the disabled.”

An example of shifting to person-first language is changing the phrase, “Jim and Jen have an autistic child” to “Jim and Jen have a child with autism.”

### Why does it matter in the fight for criminal justice reform?

Persons forced to register under the PA Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) are, first and foremost, people. Too frequently, they are dehumanized by people using the insulting slurs ‘pedophile,’ ‘rapist,’ and ‘child molester,’ for example. Those supporting the fight for rational sexual offense laws understand that these terms are problematic as they focus on a past crime and further create shame and negative self-image, instead of on a healthy, offense-free present and future.

The use of person-first language both reinforces the humanity of the registrant and can be a conversation-starter around the idea that words matter.

### We know that changing the narrative will take time.

Even some advocates for change are still using outdated identity-first language,

and sometimes that’s for a valid reason. In legal circles, phrases like “sex offender” are built into legislation and public policy, so “sticking with the language of the law” can be understandable, but such a phrase should be placed in quotation marks wherever possible, since it’s not our language. Since person-first language is a relatively new shift in thinking and presenting, it often can be used to educate others on the negative effects of identity-first language for all the reasons listed above. This method of communicating also emphasizes that people can and do change, which is the cornerstone of PARSOL’s core values.

### Opposing Person-First Language

Not every advocate is onboard with Person-First Language. For example, Autism activist Jim Sinclair rejects it on the grounds that saying “person with autism” suggests that autism can be separated from the person, the same as using the phrase, “person with a can of soda.” However, we typically wouldn’t call someone the “soda can person.” This reason reinforces the importance of person-first language when working with persons forced to register, the large majority of whom actively work to put their bad decisions in the past while moving forward with the tools to avoid re-offending.

### Why Person ‘Forced’ to Register?

We believe that SORNA imposes ongoing



COMMONLY USED TERM OR PHRASE TO AVOID	PERSON-FIRST LANGUAGE TO USE
Megan's Law Registrant	Person Forced to Register (PFR) under Megan's Law
<b>Sex Offender, Rapist, Abuser, etc.</b>	<b>Person with a sex offense charge</b>
Sex Offender Registry	Sex Offense Registry
<b>Child Abuser, Molester, etc.</b>	<b>Person with a sex offense charge involving minors</b>
Child Porn Viewer, User	Person with a sex offense charge involving illegal images
<b>Sexually Violent Predator</b>	<b>Person with the label SVP</b>
Sex Crime Victim	Survivor of sexual victimization
<b>Pedophile</b>	<b>Person with a diagnosis of pedophilia</b>

punishment for crimes already punished, which is unlawful under Article 1, Section 10 of the United States Constitution.

SORNA forces people to register for past charges based on the false premise that the risk of them committing a subsequent related crime is high. No person is forced to register for any other "crime that might happen" including those who have committed murder, violent assaults, drug offenses, etc. The Pennsylvania Department of Corrections itself even reports recidivism and rearrest rates are lowest for people with sex-related offenses.

**How can you help?**

Aside from changing your own language usage, look at your practical use. If you are a therapist, make sure you are using it in your blog posts and writings. If you are an attorney, begin using person-first language in your filings. Certainly, if you are a legislator, you can introduce bills that include person-first language, and even introduce a bill that changes the use of "sex offender" to "person with a sex offense" in all existing policy and/or legislation.

**Read & Share the Online Version of this Article**  
<https://parsol.org/how-to-use>

*PARSOL Education & Information Committee  
2023 Report*

The PARSOL Education & Information Committee's team of dedicated volunteers developed and published many useful informative materials during 2023. Our newsletter, *PARSOL QUARTERLY*, has been enhanced with the addition of new guest authors and columns, including a book review. It is sent electronically four times a year to PARSOL members and via postal mail to incarcerated individuals. We have transitioned to a new printing system which allows us to send more content to prisoners or offline members.

We launched an official YouTube channel and produced a three-part series covering the creation, solidification, and the applicability of Pennsylvania's Constitutional right to reputation as found in PA's Constitution Art. 1, Sec. 1. We also updated our print materials and created printable handouts such as the 'Timeline of PA's Registry', 'SORNA Subchapters H & I Comparison', and 'SORNA I & II Comparison.'

Most exciting for us is the launch of *PARSOL Perspectives* – a virtual members-only event where members of the PARSOL Board and Committees share their perspectives on legal action, legislation, and newly-released research. During our inaugural event, PARSOL Legal Committee members analyzed *Com. v. Torsilieri*. We are gathering ideas for more *PARSOL Perspectives* in the coming year!

The Education & Information Committee meets monthly and is open to new volunteers. Contact [legalinfo@parsol.org](mailto:legalinfo@parsol.org) for meeting information.



# Thanks, Pennsylvania! ... for proving our point!

Sometimes, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania hands us just what we need to make our case for rational sexual offense laws, and this year was a big year for that kind of thing. So... thanks, Pennsylvania government!

## Pennsylvania Task Force on Child Pornography (TFCP)

The Pennsylvania Task Force on Child Pornography (TFCP) was established by Act 53 of 2021 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Comprised of legislators, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, victim advocates, and psychologists, the TFCP examined the sentencing of crimes related to the offense of child pornography [18 Pa.C.S. § 6312], reviewed surveys and data analyses, and collected information from professionals in the field. After a year-long review, the TFCP released its final report on Sept. 28, 2022, making five recommendations, listed at right.

In response to the report, Pa. State Senator Judy Ward [R-30] introduced SB186: "Updating Pennsylvania's Statutes to Fight Exploitation of Children." According to the Senator's Memorandum, "[t]his legislation amends Title 18... of the Pa. Consolidated Statutes and Act 197 of 2004... by replacing the term 'child pornography' with 'child sexual abuse material.'" We would also suggest that 18 § 6312, "Sexual Abuse of Children," be renamed "Child Sexual Abuse Materials" to reflect the nature of the crime more accurately.

## Report Release and Findings

Unfortunately, rather than announce the report's publication, it was quietly shared on the PCCD website on a page initially used to publish technology and financial audits. We regret not finding this report sooner and strongly suggest the Commonwealth announce and publish reports openly.

During the period of time evaluated by the TFCP, there were approximately 385 new criminal cases filed during this period. Regarding reoffense rates, the studies showed that less than 4% were rearrested during one year, and less than 10% were rearrested within ten years. The report adds, "Stated conversely, there was no recidivism at one year for 96.2% of these offenders and no recidivism at three years for 90.5% of these offenders."

The data consistently shows, across the board, that Persons Forced to Register (PFRs) are a low risk to society. The TFCP proposed, "low-risk offenders should receive low-intensity consequences and treatment instead of high-intensity consequences and treatment because the wrong matching can increase the risk of recidivism." Furthermore, "Across any type of crime, an increase in age reduces the risk of recidivism. Treatment and

community supervision also reduce the risk of recidivism as do the presence of protective factors." These factors include employment, housing, constructive social and professional support, and the

## Child Pornography (TFCP) Recommendations

1) Current Pennsylvania laws and regulations that use the term 'Child Pornography' should be amended to replace that term with 'Child Sexual Abuse Material.' ... Outside of the legal system, most experts refer to these images as "Child Sexual Abuse Material," arguing that this term more accurately reflects what is depicted in these illegal images.

2) Improve access to training for law enforcement officers through the Municipal Police Officers' Education and Training Commission (MPOETC) and the Pennsylvania Chiefs of Police Association on how to investigate and prosecute these crimes. Provide targeted funding to build capacity within local police departments, the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General, the Pennsylvania State Police and District Attorneys' Offices that includes the establishment of specialized units, technology, training, and increased complement that would result in greater investigative capacity.

3) Improve access to training and equipment for county probation departments to utilize in the supervision of convicted § 6312 offenders. ... Specialized training relating to the community supervision of § 6312 offenders is not widely available. While some counties have specially trained probation and parole officers and utilize multi-disciplinary teams to share resources between investigators and probation officers, other counties do not have access to the same resources.

4) Relevant stakeholders such as the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts and the Sexual Offender Assessment Board should encourage both general and targeted education and training opportunities for judges and prosecutors regarding the legal requirement for and benefits of the SOAB Assessment. Pursuant to law, 100% of offenders who are convicted of 18 Pa. C.S. § 6312 should receive an evaluation by the Sexual Offender Assessment Board to determine whether the offender should be designated as a Sexually Violent Predator (SVP). Between 2014 and 2021, 81% of cases with a conviction had a court order requiring assessment. Targeted training for counties that send assessments at a lower rate may be necessary to improve compliance with the law.

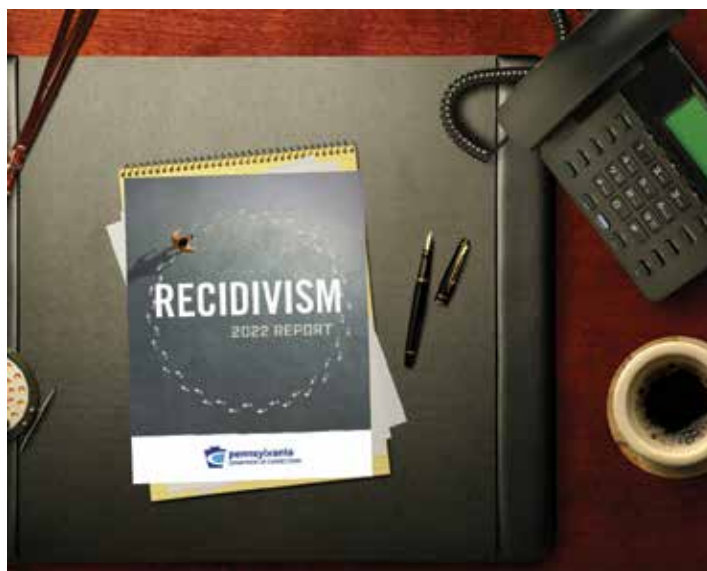
5) Relevant stakeholders such as the Sentencing Commission, the Administrative Office of Pennsylvania Courts and the Pennsylvania District Attorneys Association should encourage education and training opportunities for prosecutors and judges regarding the availability and opportunities for use of sentencing enhancements and other tools when evaluating § 6312 cases. ... While some counties use enhancements in nearly every case, 41% of counties did not use any enhancements in a three-year time frame.

**FACT**

**MYTH**



development of healthy coping and problem-solving skills. Protective factors are prosocial (e.g., employment, housing, constructive social and professional support), good problem-solving, etc.



## Pennsylvania Department of Corrections 2022 Recidivism Report

Researchers, conscientious individuals, advocacy organizations (like PARSOL!), and occasionally the media have pushed back against the counterfactual stance that persons convicted of a sexual offense are at a “dangerously high risk of reoffending.”

The most recent example of this comes from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in a report released in November 2022, “Recidivism 2022 Report,” which stated, “Property crime offenders have the highest recidivism rates. ‘Sex offenders’ have the lowest recidivism rates”.

According to the report, The PA DOC defines recidivism calculation as: “using the first re-arrest or re-incarceration after each release.” It includes technical violations (such as missing an appointment), committing a new crime while on parole, or reconviction of the same or a different crime. Therefore, rates would appear lower if one looked only at re-arrest for the same crime category. Registry advocates frequently ignore this fact when claiming “high re-offense” rates.

Furthermore, the study shows that individuals unemployed for one year after release from prison have a higher recidivism rate (72.8%) than those reentrants employed to some degree within the first year after release from prison (57.2%). Against this backdrop, consider this: many organizations openly advertise that they hire people with criminal backgrounds (including felony convictions) - *except those convicted of a sexual crime.*

## Pennsylvania Judiciary Committee Hearing - September 12, 2023

In March 2023, more than 100 PARSOL Advocates members wrote to House Judiciary Chairman Tim Briggs about HB77, a bill that would impose residency restrictions on certain persons forced to register under PA SORNA/Megan’s Law. The e-mails and legislative visits worked. Chairman Briggs called a public hearing which was held Sept. 12, 2023. He invited two panels of expert witnesses, including the ACLU of PA, two expert psychotherapists, the executive director of the Pennsylvania Sentencing Commission, and even two representatives from the Pennsylvania District Attorney’s Association. He also included PARSOL’s Memo/Talking Points on the subject in the committee materials for the day. Each and every witness said the same thing: Establishing residency restrictions is an ineffective means of protecting communities, families, and children. This testimony was supported by swaths of evidence that also can be applied to the registry in general.

We continue to be grateful for those who use their expertise to support the argument that ‘sex offender’ registries are irrational and should be abolished... (even if that’s not the argument they think they’re making at the time!)

See [PARSOL.org/blog](https://www.parsol.org/blog) to read the full reports.

**Registry Matters  
Podcast**

A weekly show dedicated to the issues,  
and politics of the registry

*Theresa - Thank you for your service and years of  
support of Registry Matters Podcast!*  
- Andy & Larry

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# Legislative Update



In 2023, PARSOL's Legislative Committee continued to focus on building relationships with legislators and staff in Harrisburg. We met with members of the Senate Judiciary Committee in the spring and with the new Leadership in the House in the summer. During these meetings, we discussed the failures of the registry, the importance of putting research-informed prevention first, and possible avenues for PA's SORNA regarding the pending *Com. v Torsilieri* decision.

The Committee also tracked dangerous and misguided bills related to sex offense policy. These proposed laws that lack a foundation in research and evidence would affect not only people forced to register, but the people of PA as a whole.

We launched a successful email campaign to the Chair of the House Judiciary Committee that shone a rational spotlight on renewed calls for residency restrictions. After PARSOL supporters spoke up, the Judiciary Committee held a public hearing on HB 77 where the experts who testified unanimously raised concerns, opposing residency restrictions for PFRs.

We used legislator-matching tools to allow PARSOL members to reach out to their elected officials and advocate for or against rational laws.

In the fall, we held a lobby day at the Capitol. Supporters from around the state convened in Harrisburg to meet with their Representatives and Senators and talk about the shortcomings of PA's registry. We explained how the *Torsilieri* decision could give us opportunities to sweep away ineffective tools and replace them with a public health campaign focused on prevention of sexual crimes.

By Randall Hayes, BS



**PARSOL is SUPPORTING these PA State Senate Bills as of 10/15/2023.**

Bill #	Primary Sponsor	Bill Title	Bill Description
SB 88	Katie Muth (D)	Expanding Post-Conviction Relief for Victims of Human Trafficking	This legislation amends section 3019 of Title 18, which allows survivors to apply to the court to expunge criminal history records related to their sex trafficking.
SB 186	Judy Ward (R)	Updating Pennsylvania's Statutes to Fight Exploitation of Children	This legislation amends Title 18 by replacing the term "child pornography" with "child sexual abuse material."
SB 414	Elder Vogel (R)	Expanding Access to Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners	This legislation will expand access to Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners and ensure quality care for victims
SB 425	Cris Dush (R)	Anti Court Deference	Re-introducing legislation to eliminate the court's ability to defer to an agency's interpretation of a vague statute.
SB 515	Michele Brooks (R)	RESCUE (Reporting Evidence of Sexual Crimes and Underaged Exploitation) Bill	Reporting of Sexual Crimes and Exploitation

**PARSOL is OPPOSING these PA State Senate Bills as of 10/15/2023.**

SB 388	Judith Schwank (D)	Dating and Sexual Violence Prevention Education	This legislation would require schools to establish specific policies regarding dating violence, including reporting procedures for students, parents, legal guardians, or third parties; disciplinary procedures and penalties for students perpetrating dating violence against other students; and information regarding the Protection from Abuse law.
SB 885	Doug Mastriano (R)	Statewide registry of perpetrators of abuse in facilities	This legislation will establish a Statewide registry of individuals found to be substantiated perpetrators of abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation of older adults in facilities.

**PARSOL is SUPPORTING these PA State House Bills as of 10/15/2023.**

HB 191	Dan Miller (D) and Donna Bullock (D)	Improving Access to Jobs and Decreasing Recidivism	This bill, based on successful legislation in Georgia, requires that every person receives a reentry certificate upon release from prison. This certificate would serve as proof of their achievements in skill development, rehabilitation, education, and their readiness for safe reentry. A similar document has proven beneficial to people in other states in helping them find work.
HB 268	Ryan Mackenzie (R)	Prohibition on Fee to Remove Booking Photographs	The new offense in this bill would be triggered any time a person who is engaged in publishing or disseminating a booking photograph solicits or accepts a fee or other consideration to remove or modify the photograph.
HB 375	MaryLouise Isaacson (D)	Electronic Submission of Sexually Explicit Images	This legislation will make unsolicited dissemination of an intimate image a summary offense if the individual knowingly transmits, distributes, publishes/disseminates an electronic communication containing a sexually explicit image to a recipient without the consent of the recipient.
HB 376	MaryLouise Isaacson (D)	Fertility Fraud and Deception	This legislation aims to change this by holding accountable any doctor who purposefully uses their own sperm to inseminate a patient without that patient's knowledge or consent. Doctors convicted of fertility fraud would commit a third-degree felony and a Tier I sexual offense. *** PARSOL supports this bill but does not support the Tier I registrant component.

**PARSOL is SUPPORTING these PA State House Bills as of 10/15/2023 (continued.)**

Bill #	Primary Sponsor	Bill Title	Bill Description
HB 1063	Ryan Mackenzie (R)	Combating Deepfake Sexual Exploitation	This legislation will prohibit the use of AI technology to create pornographic images without another person's consent and will prohibit the use of AI technology to create child pornography.
HB 1181	Darisha Parker (D)	Fair Criminal Record Screening Act	This bill will better protect individuals currently employed as well as those applying for open positions who have criminal records through several important changes
HB 1187	Chris Rabb (D)	Modernizing the definitions section of Chapter 21 of the PA Crime Code	Amends Title 18 to remove "deviate sexual intercourse" from the definitions section of Chapter 21 of Title 18.

**PARSOL is OPPOSING these PA State House Bills as of 10/15/2023.**

HB 1	Mark Rozzi (D)	Civil Lawsuit Limitation Suspension Constitutional Amendment	Constitutional Amendment 2-year suspension of limitations for civil suits
HB 1660	Jim Gregory (R)	Unlawful Contact with Minor	This bill will authorize any individual to assume a minor's identity for "catching predators who solicit sex from minors over the internet."
HB 1744	Jim Gregory (R)	Catch a Sexual Predator Amendment to the Wire Tap Act	This legislation would create an exception to the Wiretap Act to allow any individual to intercept the conversations of child predators to enforce existing sex offenses under Chapters 30 (relating to human trafficking) and 31 (relating to sex offenses).
HB 323	Craig Staats (R)	Upskirting: Justice for Children Victimized in Schools and Elsewhere (Former HB 163)	This legislation aims to dramatically increase the charges that can be brought against teachers and adults who victimize students and minors through upskirting, making the offense a felony of the third degree for a first violation and a felony of the second degree for subsequent offenses.
HB 47	Robert Mercuri (R)	Protecting Schools from Predators	This legislation protects children in schools and daycare center locations from assault by limiting the residency of sexually violent predators from moving next door to these locations.
HB 77	Arvind Venkat (D)	Protecting Our Children from Sexually Violent Predators	This legislation will prohibit registered Sexually Violent Predators from residing within 2,500 feet of a public school, private school, parochial school, pre-school, or childcare facility.

**An always-up-to-date version of PARSOL's Legislative Bill Tracker can be found at [PARSOL.org](https://www.parsol.org).**

Contact Randall at [legis@parsol.org](mailto:legis@parsol.org) or 717-820-2237 if you are willing to meet with legislators and policymakers to advocate for rational sexual offense laws!

# Theresa Robertson, Ph.D.: Driving the Bus on the Road to Rational Sexual Offense Laws in PA

By Josiah Krammes

Theresa Robertson, Ph.D., LCPC, NCC is one of the three founding members of PARSOL. Her desire to work toward change in registration laws commenced, as it often does, after encountering the extraordinary irrational and harmful restrictions imposed on a loved one. Stunned by the reality of the burdens of registration, she began researching to learn more about the realities of public registration. She soon discovered that, as nonsensical and devastating as were the restrictions to which her loved one was, many others who were exposed to even more harsh requirements. Another realization was that many of these individuals lacked the resources and supports needed to move toward a life of meaning, dignity, and value.



## Connecting with NARSOL

Theresa searched for criminal justice reform organizations in PA that were confronting these laws but came up empty. Eventually, Theresa discovered the National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL), and in January 2017, became the NARSOL State Contact for Pennsylvania. Two NARSOL connections and PA residents shared Theresa's vision of improving the state's sex offense laws and policies. The three of them, Theresa, Carol, and Stew, met for lunch and initiated the first discussion about organizing a NARSOL affiliate group in PA.

## Early Days as NARSOL Contact

In the earliest days, Theresa, Carol, and Stew represented the core of what we now know as the Pennsylvania Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (PARSOL). All three attended NARSOL conferences to begin to increase their knowledge and to network with more experienced advocates and activists across the country. They followed current research, and spoke informally with friends, family, and colleagues to educate others, and formed allied relationships when possible. Each brought their unique and special skills to the table, and quickly established early credibility for the fledgling group.

## Founding PARSOL

Theresa continued as the NARSOL Contact for Pennsylvania which resulted in ongoing connections from Pennsylvania citizens impacted by these laws. On occasion those calls resulted in connecting with others interested in helping to build a NARSOL affiliate in our state. Gradually these talented and committed individuals came together to officially launch PARSOL on March 11, 2018. Theresa assumed the role chairperson that November.





NARSOL Executive Director Brenda Jones with PARSOL Founding Executive Director Theresa Robertson at the PARSOL Annual Dinner, November 11, 2023.

### Driving the PARSOL Bus

As a fierce advocate on the road to rational sex offense laws in Pennsylvania, Theresa attended NARSOL conferences, criminal justice reform rallies and a PA Senate Judiciary Committee hearing. Theresa also presented on an array of topics that impact those affected by sex offense laws. Arenas where she spoke included the NARSOL conference, PA Attorney General Reentry Council (PARC) quarterly meeting, B4UAct annual workshop, the Pennsylvania Reentry Housing Symposium, and a variety of mental health conferences. She has also represented PARSOL as a guest on the Registry Matters podcast, launched the PA Fearless Group, and served on the PA Attorney General's Reentry Council (PARC), including the subcommittee for Persons Convicted of Sex Crimes. Changing a popular narrative based on myths and moral panic is an emotionally draining roller coaster. There are legal victories that set one's spirits high, all to be quickly brought down by a new, oppressive statute, or a separate legal loss. Theresa has endured this often taxing fickleness, all while taking care of her family,

working full-time, and completing her Ph.D. in 2018. Along the way, PARSOL continued to grow and expand its reach with the now Dr. Robertson at the helm.

### Motivations and Messages

In a July 2022 interview, she was asked why she, in particular, felt compelled to lead this charge. After rattling off a list of events that may have contributed, she concluded with, "It's just the way my life unfolded." She tells the story of the moment when it became clear that the issues of persons forced to register (PFRs) would be the focus of her dissertation research. Initially wanting to pursue shared trauma, Theresa reflects, "When all of this came down, I remember clearly sitting on my front porch and getting this knowledge, this inner wisdom thing that all of us have that arises in us at times. It arose to me: 'No, your research needs to be focused on finding ways to help people deal with the psychological and spiritual trauma that occurs as a result of being on a public registry.'" She looked up at the sky and said, 'Sorry God, you got the wrong guy.' She further noted, "This wasn't what I wanted to be doing. This wasn't why I signed up for this program. But ultimately, it was."



Theresa Robertson was presented with the PARSOL Founder's Award and the NARSOL Lifetime Achievement Award.



PARSOL Co-Founders Carol Salacka, Psy.D., Stew Steckley, and Theresa Robertson, Ph.D.

### From Driver to Passenger

After being bus driver for seven years since those early talks of a statewide advocacy group in 2017, Theresa's term on the PARSOL board is concluding. She will end her role as Executive Director to focus on her passion, psychedelic-assisted therapy (PAT). Her certification to provide MDMA-assisted therapy for PTSD will be complete early next year, and this approach to healing is anticipated to be approved by the FDA sometime in 2024. Theresa's hope is to contribute to making psychedelic healing modalities accessible to reentering citizens. She is also looking forward to spending time with her grandchildren, including the newest who arrived only a few months ago.

While she may not be our primary bus driver, she's not disembarking, and plans on "sticking around in an advisory capacity," including membership on the Support and Outreach Committee.

# PFR Disenfranchisement in PA

By Joshua Uhrich

PARSOL Board Member

I recently penned an essay on felony voting disenfranchisement at the request of an incarcerated friend who needed assistance with a Villanova University application question. As I concluded my composition, I could not help but ponder the countless instances in which PFRs are disenfranchised absent any legitimate government interest or reasonable general risk. As such, the promise of equal protection under the law continues to evade persons convicted of sex offenses.

In 2008 I was convicted of a sexual offense and sentenced to a 10-20 year prison term. In 2015, while incarcerated in a Pennsylvania state prison, I almost fainted as I carefully read the eligibility requirements for a new program featuring local colleges/universities teaching inmates inside the penitentiary gates. One bullet point among a handful read: Must not be convicted of a sexual offense. My cellmate at the time, serving a life sentence for first-degree murder, was sympathetic to the cause of all incarcerated individuals, not subscribing to the historical inmate notion that PFRs are scumbags unworthy of mercy.

Try as we did to discover the rationale behind such an exclusion, our good ol' college t r y was fu-

tile. Safety and punishment are the only reasons to prohibit an incarcerated individual from attending a program led by civilians, and the fact that a sexual offense was the only classification of crime outright barred from the program should have revealed to any reasonable person that safety was no true concern. Although I was horrified, I was not surprised. You see, this unique and arbitrary disqualification was not without precedent.

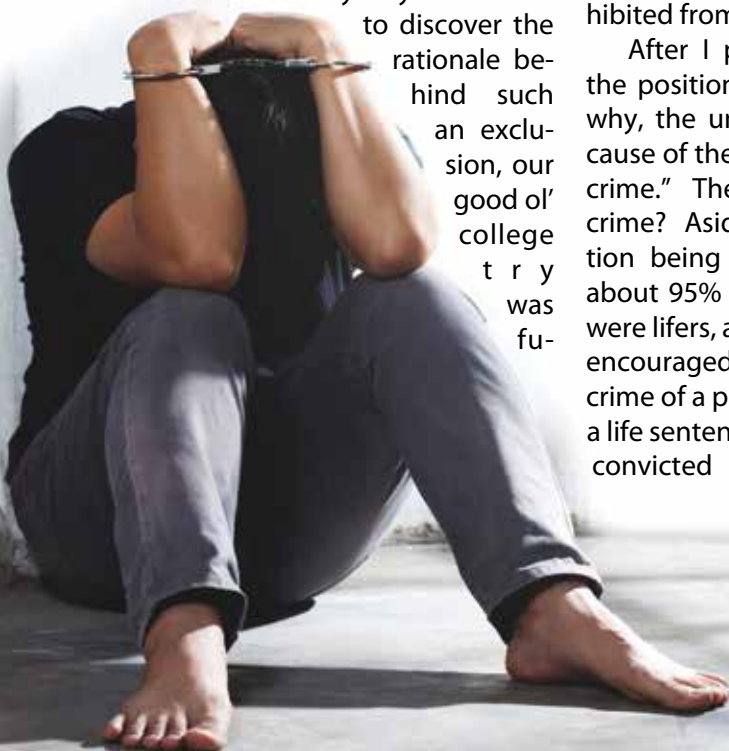
During my decade-plus of captivity, I was housed on a long-term honors unit that featured a dog training program. Each of the mere two cellmates I had during my lengthy stay on the unit were dog handlers, so for 10 years I simultaneously had two roommates – one just happened to be a four-legged creature with a bark. The program was an exceptional one, encouraging incarcerated individuals to have empathy and discipline, as well as requiring them to have a significant sense of responsibility. Above all, it gave men locked up in cages like dogs a sense of purpose. The bar was high to qualify as a dog handler (essentially, residence on the coveted honors housing unit qualified one for the voluntary job). But PFRs – many lived on the honors unit – were prohibited from the gig. *Why?* you ask.

After I provocatively applied for the position, was denied, and asked why, the unit manager replied, "Because of the assaultive nature of your crime." The assaultive nature of my crime? Aside from that characterization being wholly inaccurate, what about 95% of the dog handlers who were lifers, a group who was explicitly encouraged to apply? Does not the crime of a person behind bars serving a life sentence (in Pennsylvania, those convicted of 1st and 2nd degree murder) subsume an "as-

saultive nature?" What's more, it is widely known that many individuals who have taken the life of another have had a history of brutality, including, of all things, cruelty against animals. The double-standard and irrationality germane to such a ridiculous rule is laughable. It also is blatantly discriminatory. (And evidence exists that the D.O.C.'s/Canine Partners for Life's policy is purely arbitrary. While I was rejected from being a dog handler, nothing prohibited me from living with a dog handler. In other words, though I was unable to 'publicly' work with a dog, I was permitted to 'privately' interact with a dog. This absurd dichotomy demonstrates that prison officials' and puppy program volunteers' reservations about PFRs training dogs is a complete façade wrapped up in pure optics.)

As wacky as these scenarios sound on their face, the absurdity grows exponentially when discovering that PFRs, among all criminals, boast the lowest rate of recidivism. Journalistic sensationalism is a careless practice that characters like Nancy Grace and John Walsh perpetuate. And because a sexual offense has been the "crime du jour" for nearly two decades now (one could blame its inception on Chris Hansen and his unsophisticated "To Catch a Predator," which eventually was cut by NBC because of reckless law enforcement tactics), the victims of these dangerous fabrications are persons accused and/or convicted of sexual crimes.

Banning anyone with a felony from voting is an egregious political ploy. Barring PFRs from countless fundamental activities, as well as subjecting them to numerous collateral consequences, is a shameful exercise, not to mention an often-flagrant breach of the U.S. Constitution. These are the laws and policies PARSOL tirelessly works to eliminate.







By Josiah Krammes

# Court Reporter: A Legal Update

**PARSOL's Legal Information Committee continues to monitor relevant court cases centered on rational sexual offense laws and their impact. Here's what happened since November 1, 2022.**

**November 1, 2022:** In *Lake Naomi Club, Inc. & Pocono Pines Community Association, Inc. v. Eric Rosado and Alice Quinones*, the Pa. Commonwealth Court ruled private housing developments or homeowners associations cannot ban PFRs under the state's SORNA from living within their community. Therefore, the 2016 restrictive covenant in the Pocono Mountains housing community at Lake Naomi (Tobyhanna Twp.) runs afoul of PA's probation and parole stated goals. The association's covenant was void based largely on the SCOPA ruling in *Charles Fross v. Allegheny County*.

**November 9, 2022:** Judge David Porter for the U.S. 3rd Circuit Court has recently published an opinion on *Lacey Stradford et al. (appellees) v. Sec. of Pennsylvania Department of Corrections*. The Appellees claimed the Dept. of Corrections (DOC) methodology (contained in policy) for determining which parolees can be released to a halfway house violated the Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause which includes "community sensitivity to a criminal offense or specific criminal incident." Judge Porter ruled the policy does not violate the 14th Amendment as it is the Parole Board's responsibility to protect the citizens of Pennsylvania, and that individuals who commit a sexual offense pose a high risk to the safety of the communities. His Honor relied on the "frightening and high likelihood of reoffense" myth that research continues to bust.

**February, 27 2023:** The Superior Court of Pennsylvania transferred the case of *Commonwealth v. Robert Arnett* to the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania (SCOPA). Mr. Arnett argues SORNA's Subchapter I. This very argument has been proffered against Subchapter H in *Com. v. Torsilieri*, and at present is being examined by SCOPA.

**May 23, 2023:** SCOPA heard round two of the *Torsilieri* Arguments. The Justices are wrestling with the proposition of a ruling restoring sexual offenders' fundamental right to reputation

compelling future rulings restoring convicted felons' fundamental right to bear arms. As they quoted in *Com. v. Santana*, "consequentialism has no place when interpreting constitutional texts. For it is the will of the Framers that courts strive to ascertain when construing our foundational documents, not our own, or even the will of the supreme court justices." Hopefully, they'll remember that as they make their decision.

**June 12, 2023:** The Superior Court ruled on the reargument in *Com. v. John Aumick*. They affirmed his SVP designation. He challenged whether the trial court erred and abused its discretion by finding that he was an SVP based solely on hearsay and reports from the courts, police, and child protective services. The Court concluded the SOAB expert's opinion and knowledge were satisfactory.

**June 23, 2023:** In *Com. v. Ryan Dunn*, SCOPA was split regarding an opinion on "the notice requirement for the admission of expert testimony under 42 Pa.C.S. § 5920 (permitting expert testimony concerning victim responses and behaviors to sexual abuse in certain criminal proceedings) as it relates to Pa.R.Crim.P. 573 (concerning pretrial discovery and inspection in criminal proceedings). We hold that Rule 573 applies to Section 5920, and that the trial court erred as a matter of law in concluding the Commonwealth's last-minute disclosure of an expert witness report did not violate Rule 573. As to the proper remedy, with this Court being equally divided on whether the Commonwealth's error prejudiced Appellant Ryan Michael Dunn, the Superior Court's order denying relief is affirmed."

**September 12, 2023:** SCOPA granted the Petition for Allowance of Appeal in the case of *Com. v. William Roberts*. Mr. Roberts raises the question "Is the evidence insufficient to convict a person for failure to register under SORNA when the Commonwealth fails to prove that the defendant knew of and was [non-compliant] with his registration obligations, or as the Superior Court held, the Commonwealth need only prove that the person knew he did not register, even if he had no knowledge that he was required to do so?" This case is pending.



# News from NARSOL

The National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL), has provided the following updates:

- ◆ We recently opened an attorney database, available to the public. All of the attorneys listed have been verified as handling sexual offense cases and litigation in their respective states, and the attorneys designated with a NARSOL icon have been recommended by our members and supporters. Information can be found at <https://resources.narsol.org/site-map/people/attorneys/>
- ◆ We've had a close eye as media company *Patch Media Outlets* has posted the dreaded "red-dot Halloween sex offender" maps on local community websites. Thusfar, these have been limited to Illinois and Connecticut.
- ◆ We're watching a federal lawsuit which has been filed in Missouri challenging a state statute requiring registrants to display a 'No Candy' sign on their residence.
- ◆ Our latest project is the placement of our *Digest* newsletter into prison libraries across the country. The pilot mailing of 50 will go out soon to select institutions. We have little idea what to expect. We can't even be certain that the packet will

make its way into the libraries of all institutions and even less certain of how it will be received. The packet consists of a copy of the latest *Digest* and a letter explaining our *Digest*, its benefits to inmates, and requesting their agreement to place copies in their libraries. This is something we have wanted to do for a while. We are excited and anxious to see the results.

◆ Our executive director Brenda Jones headed to California in October to participate in a panel at the ACSOL conference and to the PARSOL dinner honoring long-time NARSOL friend and supporter Theresa Robertson, Ph.D. in November.

◆ We continue to watch federal lawsuits, including one in Arizona which challenges portions of their sex offender registry law. The case has been brought by AZRSOL, our affiliate organization there. NARSOL itself has been and will be involved in a variety of suits challenging a variety of registry requirements.

NARSOL's end goal is the abolishment of the sex offender registry and, indeed, all shaming registries. We view each favorable court decision analogous to yards gained and first downs in a football game.

## PUBLIC POLICY CORNER

### PARSOL's USSC Memo

During her confirmation hearings, Supreme Court Justice and former vice-chair of the United States Sentencing Commission (USSC) Ketanji Brown Jackson, reflecting USSC's stance on sexual offenses and sentencing:

*"The statute doesn't say, 'Look only at the guidelines and stop.'*

*The statute doesn't say, 'Impose the highest possible penalty for this sickening and egregious crime.'*

*The statute says, 'Calculate the guidelines, but also look at various aspects of this offense and impose a sentence that is sufficient but not greater than necessary to promote the purposes of punishment.'"*

Justice Brown Jackson explained that current sentencing guidelines for possession and distribution of child sexual abuse materials were developed when receiving 1,000 images of child pornography was perpetrated via postal mail for extreme fees. The manufacture involved significant physical media, not the click and download of one zip file within seconds. Her point was that for some crimes (indeed, disproportionately for sexual crimes), statutes have not been revised to reflect changes in worldly scenarios and/or realities.

Like Justice Brown Jackson, PARSOL believes all sexual abuse is unacceptable and that physical, mental, and emotional healing is possible by focusing on prevention-based, rehabilitative, and trauma-informed programs rooted in healing rather than lifetime, shame-centered punishment. Yet, we know many federal laws and sentencing recommendations unfairly discriminate against people with sex offenses.

PARSOL submitted a ten-page memorandum of public interest to the USSC to this effect. We recommended lower sentencing ranges for failure to register issues and for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, the elimination of mandatory minimums for non-production Child Sexual Abuse Material offenses, the use of pre-trial home confinement instead of incarceration, elimination of program participation barriers in the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and other rational sexual offense sentencing policy.

Our memo was included in the commission's final report and can be found at:

<https://parsol.org/parsols-public>

Congrats **PARSOL** on a successful year!



**Fighting to restore dignity and constitutional rights to millions**

**NARSOL envisions a society free from public shaming, dehumanizing registries, discrimination, and unconstitutional laws.**

**Visit [narsol.org](https://narsol.org).**

# PARSOL BOARD MEMBER PROFILE: DAVID L. GARLOCK: UNLIKELY ADVOCATE

PARSOL Board Member and NARSOL liaison David L. Garlock is a formerly-incarcerated criminal justice reform advocate and reentry expert. David and his brother received 25-year sentences in Alabama after taking the life of their sexual abuser. A client of Equal Justice Initiative, he was released on parole in 2013 after serving more than 13 years and pursuing several educational opportunities while incarcerated. He subsequently obtained his bachelor's degree from Eastern University.

As a victim of childhood sexual abuse, David is often seen as an unlikely advocate for the elimination of public 'sex offender' registries. When asked why he opposes them, he says, "Criminal Justice Reform is for EVERYONE. We cannot have any carveouts when we are fighting for people's freedom and to correct an unjust system. We cannot pick and choose who is 'worthy' in our opinion."

David's professional experience includes advocacy and reentry program management. With his story and professional expertise, his voice has made an impact in campaigns to abolish death by incarceration, create geriatric parole programs, and reinstitute Pell Grant funding for incarcerated students. He served as the Lancaster Program Director for New Person Ministries, a reentry program for men who have been convicted of sex offenses and other returning citizens, from 2017-2020. David graduated from JustLeadershipUSA's Leading with Conviction fellowship program in 2019.

In addition to his board role with PARSOL, he serves on the National Association for Rational Sex Offense Laws (NARSOL), the Pennsylvania Reentry Council, and the Eastern University Prison Education Program. He previously served as Co-Chair of the Lancaster County Reentry Coalition.

David enjoys educating the next generation of criminal justice professionals on rehabilitation and advocating in various spheres for an effective and equitable justice

system. He is a frequent speaker at colleges and universities, criminal and social justice conferences, and community events, and he appeared in the film *Just Mercy* (2020). He is also a TEDxArcadia speaker. David resides in Coatesville, PA with his family, where they enjoy serving with their local church.

More information about David can be found at his website: [DavidLGarlock.com](http://DavidLGarlock.com).



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# VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

**Join one of PARSOL's committees and make a difference for those affected by Pennsylvania's Irrational Sex Offense Laws!** Email [volunteer@parsol.org](mailto:volunteer@parsol.org) or call 717-820-2237 ext. 1

## **Education and Information (E & I) Committee**

The E & I Committee's primary goal is to educate everyone on the reality of SORNA and sexual offense statistics through publications, social media, printouts, and word of mouth. We gather information from research studies and government reports and compact the information into an easy-to-present narrative. We are looking for dependable researchers, infographic designers, and professional writing volunteers to work on various projects. The researcher's duties include using a range of tools to acquire information and interpret data and writing up reports and articles for the website and newsletter. The infographic designer will transform the researcher's work into visual graphics for print and digital uses including banner ads, social media posts, website graphics, newsletters, YouTube videos, fact cards, etc.

## **Legal Information Committee**

The Legal Information Committee's purpose is to track and analyze Pennsylvania and federal court rulings that affect sexual offense laws, aid the Legislative Committee in understanding constitutional issues of current and proposed legislation, and develop theoretical legal arguments for attorneys to use and modify at their discretion. We share our findings with the organization and the public to bring awareness of the constitutional rights Pennsylvanians have while on the Registry. We are looking for individuals with a thorough comprehension of state and federal law, legal writing, and analytical experience. We are particularly seeking people with current or prior experience as attorneys, paralegals, law professors, etc.

## **Joint Legislative Affairs & Public Policy Committee**

The Legislative Affairs & Public Policy Committee's tracks proposed and active legislation that affects sexual offense laws. The committee may support, oppose, or recommend amendments to legislation. Committee members build relationships with lawmakers and a policymakers. The committee also submits public policy memorandums and appoints representatives to the Pennsylvania Reentry Coalition (PARC). We work closely with the Legal Information Committee to identify legislation with constitutional issues.

*Legislative Affairs is primarily a committee of PARSOL's Advocates Organization 501(c)4. Public Policy is primarily a committee of PARSOL's 501(c)3.*

## **Support Committee**

The Support Committee's purpose is to support those affected by irrational sexual offense laws, including Megan's Law/SORNA. Committee members research and compile helpful resources such as housing, employment, wellness, mental and physical health, etc. Members of the support committee also write, via post or web portal, to persons who are incarcerated in a PA DOC or county facility. For more information about the support committee's work including meeting schedules: <https://resources.parsol.org>.

*Individuals with demonstrated service on one or more committees, a willingness to contribute time and resources, and confirmed alignment with PARSOL's mission, vision, and core values may also be considered for the Board of Directors of PARSOL or PARSOL Advocates.*



# RESCINDED NO JOB FOR YOU!

By John Dawe, MNA, CNP, RCP

When hiring employees, companies often strive to build a workforce that reflects their values, promotes diversity, and supports community integration. One often-overlooked demographic in the hiring process is re-entering citizens, particularly those with a sex offense conviction. While this variety of crime rightly carries legitimate concerns in certain settings, it shoulders a stigma no other offense must. Consequently, pertaining to all 'offenders,' it's essential to consider the merits of providing second chances to individuals who have served their time and are working towards rehabilitation.

However, time and time again, we hear stories of individuals applying for jobs – including those that advertise they hire felons – who get to the final stage of the interview process, a background check is run, and the applicant is told, "If your charge was drugs or theft we could overlook it, but you're a 'sex offender.' So yeah, no."

## Ashley's Story

In July 2018, Ashley was charged with two felony and one misdemeanor crime and was then classified as a Tier 2 "Sex Offender" and placed on the Pennsylvania's SORNA for 25 years. Because her offense was directly linked to a position at her job, she lost that job and returned instead to a previous employer, working a minimum-wage retail job. Due to the COVID-19 shutdowns, she lost that job and struggled to find new employment in similar retail positions for several months.

"I cannot say (for sure) why I didn't get a position," she recalls, "but at the time, I was confident it was related to my conviction."

Finally, a friend with connections to a local restaurant helped her get a job there.

Since July 2018, Ashley and her son have relied on Medicaid, SNAP Benefits, and other public assistance from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services, as well as financial support from her family to survive.

In January 2021, Ashley sought an opportunity to begin a program to get a Master's Degree in Psychology with the hope of working with offenders, re-entrants, etc. She was accepted, and she thrived in her studies. Just a few months shy of graduation, she began to apply for positions and was ex-

cited to land an interview with an agency using law enforcement diversion and case management at a crisis level with adults involved with the police who needed to find stability (housing, employment, treatment, rehab, etc.) rather than face arrest, criminal charges, or jail. Ashley's her education, job history, and life experience uniquely qualified her for this job. The hiring agency's statement, "Individuals with personal involvement in the criminal justice system to encouraged to apply," provided hope & encouragement.

And so she did. She endured three interviews, was open about her involvement with the county's criminal court system (without disclosing her specific case details), and was offered the full-time position.

Later that afternoon, Ashley received a call from HR to congratulate her and discuss onboarding. And then they asked for her clearances.

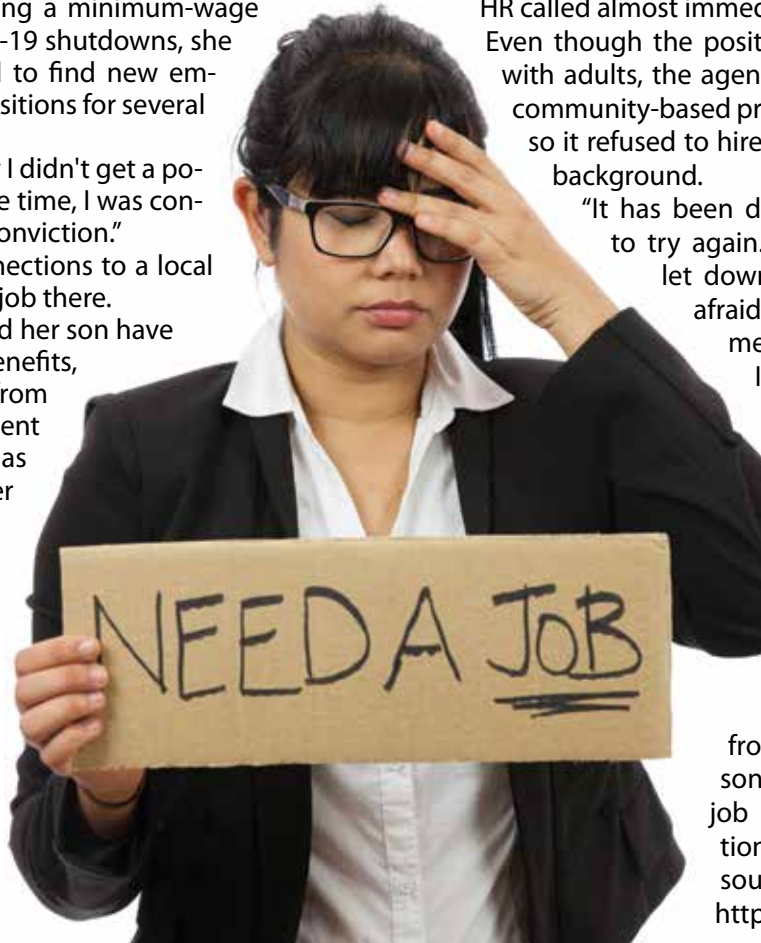
"I asked why those were necessary as it was a 'second chance job,' and was told by human resources that it was 'part of the process,' so I emailed the program director to ask if I would be able to share more specific information related to my charges, and she said yes," Ashley recalls. "I shared very briefly the nature of the charges and my status as a Megan's Law registrant, and then I never heard from her again." HR called almost immediately to rescind the offer.

Even though the position was working exclusively with adults, the agency told her that it has "other community-based programs that include families," so it refused to hire someone with a sex offense background.

"It has been difficult to build the courage to try again. I'm afraid to apply and be let down again," Ashley shared. "I'm afraid to leave a job that accepts me and not be able to return if I need to."

## What happens next?

Thousands of re-entrants with sexual offenses share Ashley's story. That's why PARSOL has is excited to release our Resources Website, with several job board partners, with list of job postings from companies that hire persons with sex offenses. PARSOL's job board and helpful information, including employer resources, can be found online at <https://resources.parsol.org>.





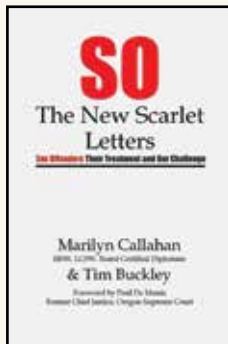
# Book Reports

by Christine H.



## 'SO' - The New Scarlett Letters

Published in 2018, this book is coauthored by Marilyn Callahan and Tim Buckley. They both have volunteered in prisons and re-entry programs. Marilyn is a social worker who has worked extensively with people accused of sex offenses. All subjects



featured in the book are convicted of an offense involving sexual contact. The end of each chapter contains a brief client story.

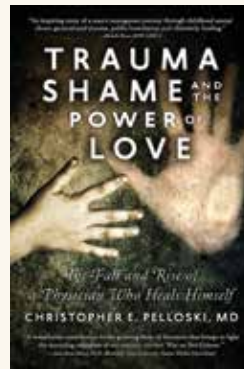
The book first describes different offenses and lists some qualities that may lead people to commit a sex offense, differences between men and women who are accused of a sex offense, and treatment of people with intellectual and/or developmental disabilities.

Many different types of therapy and treatment are discussed in the book. It does make a connection between sex offenses and addiction or addictive behaviors. They are very hopeful and encourage positive reinforcement, along with a lot of hard work by the individuals in treatment. Yet, the book would benefit from the use of person-first language.

The authors write about how the registry and restrictions on people forced to register make it harder to get help and become a productive person in society. This book makes it clear that in order to reduce sex crimes and offenses, it's much better to help the people accused of the crimes. Punishment

## Trauma, Shame, and the Power Of Love

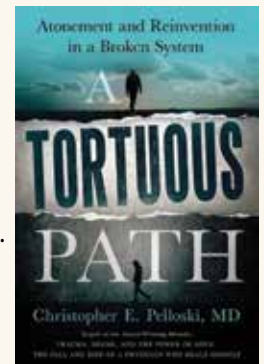
This review covers two books by the same author, *Trauma, Shame And The Power Of Love: The Fall and Rise of a Physician Who Heals Himself* and *A Tortuous Path: Atonement and Reinvention in a Broken System*, by Christopher E. Pelloski, MD.



Dr. Pelloski was a well-respected physician before the time of his arrest. The first book begins with the FBI raid of his home and computers and ends with his sentencing. He writes about his crime of viewing child sexual abuse materials ("child pornography"), how he came to view it on his computer at home, how he felt while viewing the images, and some issues from his past that may have influenced him to continue viewing the images. He discusses the excessive measures the FBI incorporated in raiding his family home. He talks about the extreme media sensationalism of his crime. He also writes about how all of this affected his family, friends, and neighbors.

## A Tortuous Path

The second book, *A Tortuous Path*, chronicles his time in the federal prison, halfway house, and after release as a person forced to register (PFR). It begins with intake on his first day at a federal prison satellite low security facility. He writes about his time there and some of the people he met. This book covers the three months he spent in a halfway house and after his release. He talks about some of the struggles he faces being a person forced to register and makes it clear how ineffective and harmful the registry is. I found this book to be quite informative and very enjoyable.



I appreciate that Christopher Pelloski wrote his story and talked about a few of the problems he dealt with. He is a person with access to an incredible support system and wealth, so I know the average person has to deal with even more problems and issues. He does a good job of making it clear that this is a broken system and causes a lot more problems than any help it may provide.

Read all the PARSOL Book Recommendations and Reviews

<https://parsol.org/books>



**Pennsylvania Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws & PARSOL**  
**2023 Consolidated Financial Reports**  
**AS OF 10/31/2023**

**Statement of Activities and Functional Expenses**

Revenue:

Unrestricted Donations	\$5,860.54
(Restricted Donations – Travel Support	\$1,801.07)
<b>Total Revenue:</b>	<b>\$5,860.54</b>

Expenses:

General/Administrative:	\$1,243.85
Program – Travel:	\$1598.01
Program – Advocacy:	\$435.31
Program - Support:	\$624.19
Fundraising:	\$1,470.36
<b>Total Expenses:</b>	<b>\$5,371.72</b>

Net Revenue:

<b>Net Revenue:</b>	<b>\$488.82</b>
(Restricted (NARSOL Conference 2024): \$203.06)	

**Statement of Financial Position**

**Cash Assets:**

Truist c3 Checking	\$5,812.34
Paypal (c4 holdings)	\$448.95
<b>Total Cash on Hand:\$</b>	<b>6,261.29</b>

**Accrued Expenses**

Lobbying Expenses (subject to 501h)	435.31
Annual Dinner Expense	1,120.36
BEO	\$766.54
Awards	\$178.46
Programs	\$127.20
Dessert OOO	\$ 48.16
Annual Meeting Expense	500.00
Meals & Lodging	\$500.00
<b>Total Accrued Expenses:\$</b>	<b>2,055.67</b>

<b>Anticipated Year End Bal:</b>	<b>\$4,205.62</b>
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**Pennsylvania's Fearless** is a 12-step/12-tradition inspired support group for anyone who is affected by the Megan's Law Registry (this includes registrants, family, and friends), and those who live in neighboring states.

**Pennsylvania Fearless** is a safe environment free from law enforcement or unsympathetic treatment professionals. It is a place to vent and connect with people "who get it."

**Pennsylvania Fearless** has established a code of conduct to help maintain the positive atmosphere that we have cultivated. This ensures that everyone feels respected, heard, and welcomed so that we can maintain a safe space to share and find support.

**Learn more** and view the current meeting schedule at the below link!



<https://PARSOL.org/fearless>