

# RATIONAL REFORM

2024-25 PARSOL ANNUAL

**PARSOL**



PA ASSOCIATION FOR RATIONAL SEXUAL OFFENSE LAWS

**INCLUDING...**

- BRIDGING HUMANITY & JUSTICE
- BUILDING AUTHENTIC CHANGE
- NO ROOM AT THE HOME: S.O. POLICY & AGING
- #STUCKIN1995: 30 YEARS OF BAD POLICY







## 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, trauma-informed, and healing-focused legislative and public policy initiatives that respect both our Constitution and the dignity of all people.

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### PARSOL Advocates Landmark Year

Learn about the advancements the PARSOL team has made with state policy-makers, legislators, and the AG’s office.



## Chair's Corner:

# 2025: A PARSOL Jubilee Year of Hope

I am always amazed at what the PARSOL team can accomplish in one year and how we push ourselves further in the next. I don't mean to brag, but the organization we have developed in Pennsylvania is truly astounding. We are comprised of diverse individuals who share a common goal of rational reform. That passion is what keeps going and pushing for progress. Everyone involved with PARSOL is essential to our mission, from our Board of Directors to our volunteers and donors, at all education and professional experience levels, persons forced to register, their family members and friends, reentry professionals, and concerned citizens all push forward.

The Roman Catholic Church has declared 2025 the '**Jubilee Year of Hope!**' This theme emphasizes a call for rehabilitation and reintegration into society. The Jubilee's rest, release, and renewal themes encourage seeking spiritual healing and personal transformation. It reminds us that hope and forgiveness are available to all, regardless of past transgressions. Focusing on restorative justice during this Jubilee year challenges communities to balance accountability with compassion, providing opportunities for us to rebuild our lives while ensuring public safety. This

approach also reflects the Jubilee's spirit of mercy and second chances, inviting humanity to embrace hope for a future where we can contribute positively to society, guided by faith and supported by a community committed to justice and redemption.

As we look ahead to 2025, the Jubilee Year of Hope resonates deeply with our mission at PARSOL. The message of hope, rehabilitation, and second chances is not confined to religious boundaries but speaks to the universal human desire for progress and redemption. It echoes our commitment to creating **a Pennsylvania safe and just for all**, reminding us that every individual, regardless of their past, has the potential to contribute positively to society.

Our diverse team, united by this shared vision, embodies the spirit of renewal and transformation that the Jubilee year represents. As we continue our work, let us carry this message of hope with us, for it is hope that fuels our passion, drives our progress, and illuminates the path toward a more just and compassionate future for all Pennsylvanians.

- Josiah Krammes, Chair,

*Pennsylvania Assoc. for Rational Sexual Offense Laws, Inc.*

## From the Director's Desk:

# Three Decades Later We're #Stuckin1995

Picture it. Pennsylvania. 1995. **Thirty Years Ago**, the world was a very different place. A first-class stamp cost a mere 32 cents, and a gallon of gas cost just \$1. The internet was in its infancy, with most Pennsylvanians still getting acquainted with dial-up connections, if they had internet access at all. Only 13% of Americans owned a mobile phone, and the concept of smartphones or video conferencing was something out of *Star Trek*. In a pre-9/11 world, later Homeland Security Secretary Tom Ridge is in his first year as Pennsylvania Governor.

Fast forward to 2025, and the landscape has transformed dramatically. Stamps now cost 73 cents, gas prices hover around \$3-\$4 per gallon, and more than 95% of Pennsylvania households have access to high speed broadband internet. Nearly everyone has powerful smart devices, and 5G networks enable innovations like autonomous vehicles, smart homes, and remote surgery.

Yet, amidst this evolution, one thing has remained surprisingly static: the Pennsylvania 'Sex Offender' registry.

When then-Governor Ridge signed Megan's Law on October 21, 1995, our understanding of sexual offenses, prevention, and rehabilitation was also in its infancy. Instead of facts, the registry was based on the assumption that public notification would enhance community safety and that recidivism rates were 'frightening and high.' However, **three decades** of research have, instead, revealed the registry endangers communities instead of protecting them.

We've learned that sexual harm prevention education is highly effective in preventing sexual violence. Treatment approaches have evolved, with the Risk-Needs-Responsivity and Good Lives Models proving very effective. We now recognize the importance of individualized, long-term treatment with follow-up care.

Despite these advancements, the registry remains largely unchanged. Data shows that actually increases risk and recidivism by hindering one's ability to reintegrate into society. Its one-size-fits-all approach ignores the complexities of individual cases and

the potential for rehabilitation.

Also, decades of research indicate persons with sex-related offenses have the lowest recidivism rates of all other crimes except homicides, with only a 4% chance of committing a new sex offense. Yet, we continue to assume a high-risk exists, regardless of offense or progress in treatment.

As we reflect on how far we've come in other areas of society, it's clear that our approach to sex offense policy is thirty years overdue for an update.

This publication is full of information to do just that -- learn about evidence-based practices and research, how to advocate with policy-makers and elected officials, and build a better life for those affected by dehumanizing, draconian laws stuck in 1995.

Please join and follow PARSOL during 2025 as we launch our **#Stuckin1995** campaign and bring light to the lack of advancements we so desperately need. You can find us on social media everywhere at @PARSOLOfficial.

- John Dawe, MNA, CNP, RCP(F)  
PARSOL Managing Director

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# BRIDGING HUMANITY AND JUSTICE

A Plenary Discussion with  
Pennsylvania Executive Deputy  
Attorney General Robert Reed, Esq.

At the heart of the 2024 PARSOL Fall Conference's opening plenary, Pennsylvania Executive Deputy Attorney General Robert Reed, Esq. delivered an impassioned address centered on justice, empathy, and systemic reform. This keynote captured the challenges marginalized individuals face and proposed transformative strategies to create trauma-informed systems that honor humanity. Reed's presentation illuminated the path toward a compassionate and equitable society through anecdotes, policy insights, and a heartfelt call to action.

## A Vision Rooted in Justice and Empathy

Reed's keynote began with a powerful reflection on his career-long commitment to justice. Drawing from his 30-plus years in the U.S. Department of Justice, Reed acknowledged the complexities of striving for fairness within imperfect systems. He underscored that empathy and respect must underpin efforts to reform organizations like the Department of Corrections, which have historically perpetuated cycles of trauma for both the incarcerated and those working within these environments.

Highlighting PARSOL's mission, Reed praised its dedication to a justice model centered on prevention, dignity, and trauma-informed care. "We need to have a society that sees each other as human," he asserted, emphasizing the critical need for compassion in policymaking and advocacy.

## Understanding Trauma as a Root Cause

Central to Reed's address was acknowledging trauma as a foundational factor influencing behavior and societal outcomes. He pointed to the work of trauma expert Sandra Bloom (<https://sandrabloom.com/>), who has spent decades advocating for systems that address the emotional wounds affecting individuals and communities. Reed emphasized that trauma-informed approaches are essential across sectors, including the education, healthcare, and justice systems.

For instance, he described efforts to train Pennsylvania police officers on trauma sensitivity, a groundbreaking initiative to change interactions between law enforcement and the public. Similarly, the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections has begun educating its staff on trauma, marking a critical step toward systemic change.

## Safety and the Scourge of Scams

Shortly before the conference, PARSOL informed Reed about the wide extent to which scammers actively use registry data, including employers, home addresses, vehi-



ROBERT REED, ESQ.



cle information, etc., to target registrants.

Reed spoke candidly about the pervasive insecurity in modern society, from unsafe cultural environments to the prevalence of financial scams targeting vulnerable populations, including scams against individuals on the registry for sexual offenses, exploiting their fear and isolation.

His message was clear: awareness and self-advocacy are key defenses against such threats. "Nobody from the government is going to call you up and ask for money," he stressed, urging attendees to verify claims and report fraudulent activity. "Scams aren't just a consumer protection issue, it's people breaking the law."

### Trauma-Informed Justice: Courtrooms to Prisons

"A trauma-informed justice system extends to all levels, from courts to correctional facilities," added Reed, who detailed efforts to create trauma-sensitive juvenile and criminal justice systems in Pennsylvania. He cited the inclusion of reentry courts designed to provide collaborative, rehabilitative opportunities for individuals leaving incarceration.

Especially inspiring to conference attendees was Reed's engagement with incarcerated individuals where he witnessed transformative moments of self-realization and hope. "People are almost stunned to hear that they can heal and recover," he shared. These interactions underscore the importance of addressing childhood trauma as a predictor of future behavior and advocating for restorative practices over punitive measures.

### Community Engagement, PARC, and Change

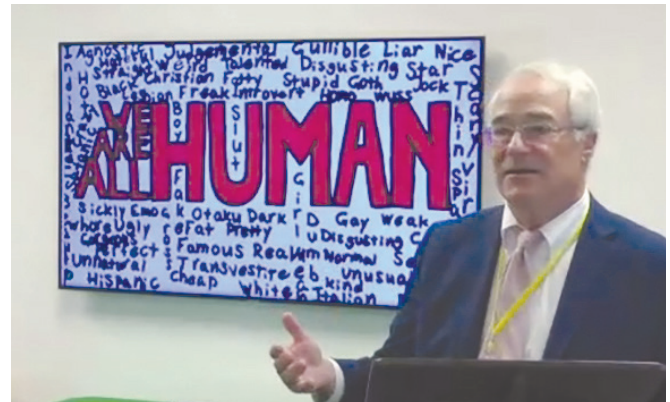
Throughout the plenary, Reed emphasized the role of lived experience in fostering understanding and driving change. Stories, he noted, humanize abstract policy discussions and reveal the systemic failings that often trap individuals in cycles of harm. He highlighted initiatives like the Pennsylvania Reentry Council (PARC), which brings diverse stakeholders together to address reintegration barriers, including housing, employment, and education.

Reed thanked PARSOL staff, including managing director John Dawe, legislative director Randall Hayes, and board members Lisa Perry and Lisa Kessler-Peters, who serve in volunteer leadership roles within PARC, including heading a special committee on reentrants with sex offenses.

### The Road Ahead: A Call to Action

"Change is brewing," Reed declared, urging attendees to join efforts to build a more humane society. From training police officers and judges to creating trauma-informed schools and communities, he painted a picture of progress fueled by empathy, collaboration, and persistence.

He also underscored the importance of personal resilience, advising attendees to prioritize their mental and emotional well-being. He suggested that simple practices



like mindfulness and cultivating supportive relationships can help individuals navigate the stress of advocacy and systemic challenges.

In closing, Reed encouraged individuals to share their stories, citing the profound impact of personal narratives in changing perspectives. By integrating stories of lived experience in advocacy, trauma-informed training sessions, and system reform, decision-makers can better understand the realities faced by those they aim to serve.

- By PARSOL Staff

### Important Facts about Scams

- Scammers pretend to be from an organization you know, such as the police, parole or probation, the courts, etc., or from an organization threatening you with blackmail.
- Scammers propose a problem or prize, such as missing a court date, technical issues with supervision or registration, or obtaining exploitative information about you.
- Scammers pressure you to act immediately, often using public information such as registry data, public photos, and information from social media.
- Scammers tell you to pay money in a specific, often untraceable way, such as cryptocurrency, gift cards, or cash.

Report a Scam or Incident  
Online at  
<https://parsol.org/report>



# 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!



CONTACT US TODAY AT:  
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717-820-2237 EXT. 1



## Registry Matters Podcast



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

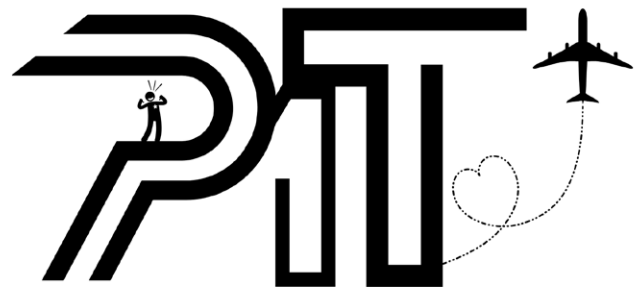
*Congratulations PARSOL on a 2024 filled with advocacy and progress!*

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# ***NO ROOM AT THE HOME***



## *Barriers to Long-Term Care for Aging Populations on the Sex Offense Registry*

When criminologist Stephanie Jerstad's former client, a registered 'sex offender' died waiting to find a long-term care facility in Illinois that would accept him, she dedicated her dissertation research to studying if facility-level characteristics matter in explaining organizational policies for the admission of persons on the sex offender registry. This issue intersects with public health, social justice, and human rights, requiring a closer examination of legislative, institutional, and societal factors.

Millersville University criminologist Stephanie Jerstad, Ph.D.'s workshop at the PARSOL 2024 Fall Conference explored the challenges associated with long-term care access for aging individuals with criminal histories, highlighting the restrictive policies and misconceptions that exacerbate these barriers, emphasizing the need for ethical and evidence-based approaches to care. This article highlights her research and findings as presented.

### **The Problem of Access**

The denial of long-term care for individuals with sexual harm convictions has created a public health issue of growing concern. Stories from across the country illustrate the severity of the problem. For example, a 76-year-old man in Illinois was denied admission to over 200 long-term care facilities due to his registry status. Unable to find placement, he died in the hospital. Such cases demonstrate how existing policies can have devastating consequences, particularly for those in advanced age who require specialized medical support.

This exclusion arises from legislative barriers, institutional risk aversion, and pervasive societal stigma. Many facilities refuse to consider applicants with any criminal histories, citing potential liability and community concerns, even when such individuals pose minimal risk. This is especially true for individuals with sexual offenses.



## Legislative and Regulatory Barriers

Twelve states, along with select areas in Florida, have implemented laws dictating how long-term care facilities should handle individuals on sex offender registries. These laws, passed largely between 2005 and 2010, emphasize restrictive measures, including:

- **Mandatory Notifications:** In some jurisdictions (not Pennsylvania), facilities must inform staff, residents, and sometimes the public about the presence of an individual with a criminal history.
- **Registry Screening:** Admission processes often disqualify individuals based on registry checks, regardless of health status or age.
- **Segregation Policies:** Some states mandate that residents with criminal histories be housed separately or under heightened supervision. In Pennsylvania, no more than five individuals designated sexually violent predators (SVPs) may live in one facility.
- **Residency Restrictions:** In some states proximity to schools, parks, or daycares often disqualifies facilities from admitting individuals on registries. While this does not apply to Pennsylvania, if someone is on parole or probation, their release conditions may contain these kinds of restrictions.

Such measures are frequently justified as protective but effectively act as exclusionary practices. For instance, Illinois requires detailed disclosures about an individual's criminal history to staff and other residents, a policy that further stigmatizes and isolates this population.

## Impact of Misconceptions and Risk Aversion

A significant driver of these restric-

tive policies is the misconception that individuals with sexual harm convictions are highly likely to re-offend. Research indicates that the recidivism rates for this population are among the lowest of all criminal groups, particularly as individuals age. After age 60, the likelihood of re-offense drops to nearly zero. Despite these findings, public perceptions—shaped by media portrayals and societal fears—continue to depict this group as perpetual threats.

Institutional policies often reflect these unfounded fears. Many facilities cite risk management and liability concerns as reasons for denial. Administrators are particularly wary of potential lawsuits or negative publicity, especially in cases where they are required to disclose the presence of residents with prior convictions.

Interestingly, some studies suggest that facilities are more concerned about residents with cognitive impairments, such as dementia than those with criminal histories. Evidence shows that individuals with conditions like Alzheimer's are more likely to exhibit inappropriate sexual behavior due to their illness. Yet, facilities remain focused on excluding those with past convictions, even when there is no evidence of ongoing risk.

## State and Facility-Level Factors

Certain state and facility characteristics significantly influence whether individuals with criminal histories can access care:

- **Punitive State Policies:** States with strict residency restrictions, civil commitment laws, or high incarceration rates are more likely to enforce exclusionary practices in long-term care.
- **Facility Ownership:** Nonprofit facilities are far more likely than for-profit ones to admit individuals with criminal histories.

Nonprofit organizations often approach admissions holistically, considering the individual's health needs and overall circumstances rather than solely their criminal record.

- **Administrator Backgrounds:** Facilities led by administrators with nursing or healthcare experience are more likely to accept applicants based on their medical needs. Conversely, those with business backgrounds tend to prioritize risk management and liability, resulting in more exclusionary policies.

## Broader Ethical and Public Health Implications

The denial of long-term care access raises critical ethical questions. Regardless of their past, every individual deserves humane treatment and healthcare access. By excluding individuals with criminal histories, particularly those who are elderly and frail, facilities contribute to a public health crisis that disproportionately affects vulnerable populations.

There are also significant implications for social justice. Denying access to care perpetuates cycles of marginalization and reinforces stigma, often exacerbating the very conditions that policies aim to address. Individuals on registries have already served their sentences and reintegrated into society, yet they continue to face lifelong discrimination due to outdated and overly broad registry requirements.

Additionally, policies that deny care based on past convictions often need to account for the aging process. As people age, their health deteriorates, and their risk of re-offense diminishes. Ignoring these factors creates a system prioritizing punitive measures over

evidence-based approaches to care.

### Research Findings on Long-Term Care Exclusions

Research reveals that the current exclusionary practices are rooted in myths rather than data. For example:

- **Recidivism Rates:** Individuals with sexual harm convictions have recidivism rates between 5–15%, with rates dropping significantly after age 60. This is far lower than for other offender groups.
- **Time Since Conviction:** Most facilities do not consider the time elapsed since an individual's offense. A conviction from decades earlier is treated like a recent offense, even when the individual has demonstrated rehabilitation and good behavior.
- **Universal Exclusion:** Many facilities deny admissions without distinguishing between the severity or circumstances of the offense. This one-size-fits-all approach fails to consider the unique circumstances of each individual.

### Potential Solutions & Next Steps

Addressing this issue requires a multifaceted approach that balances public safety with ethical care. Potential strategies include:

- **Legislative Reform:** Revisiting registry laws and long-term care policies to reflect evidence-based practices rather than fear-driven measures. This could include removing lifetime registry requirements for low-risk individuals or creating pathways for removal based on rehabilitation and time offense-free.
- **Data Collection and Advocacy:** Gathering comprehensive

data on the number of individuals affected by these policies can strengthen advocacy efforts. Clear evidence of the scale of the problem is essential for driving legislative and institutional change.

- **Education and Awareness:** Dispelling myths about recidivism and risk through public awareness campaigns can help reduce stigma and foster more compassionate policies. Facilities and policymakers must be educated about the realities of risk and the ethical implications of denial.
- **Collaboration with Nonprofit Organizations:** Nonprofit facilities have demonstrated greater willingness to admit individuals with criminal histories. Expanding partnerships with these organizations can provide immediate relief while broader reforms are pursued.

### Conclusion

The exclusion of aging individuals with criminal histories from long-term care represents a critical intersection of public health, social justice, and human rights. Current policies, driven by myths and societal stigma, deny essential care to a vulnerable population and perpetuate cycles of marginalization. By prioritizing evidence-based approaches, fostering dialogue, and enacting meaningful reforms, it is possible to create a system that balances safety with compassion and dignity. Addressing this issue is a matter of public health and a testament to the values of equity and humanity that underpin a just society.

- By PARSOL Staff with thanks to Dr. Stephanie Jerstad

## 1995 to 2025 Thirty Years of Megan's Law in Pennsylvania

Pennsylvania Governor Tom Ridge signed Megan's Law into law on **October 24, 1995** mandating the public notification of the whereabouts of registered sex offenders, aiming to provide communities with information to protect children from potential harm. Since then, there have been thirty years of evidence-based research showing:

**1. Recidivism Rates Lower than Assumed.** A 2019 study by Hanson et al. found a sexual recidivism rate of just 4.2% after 15 years, with most remaining offense-free in the community. Much lower than the "frightening and high" recidivism rate used in determining Megan's Law policies.

**2. Risk Assessment Tools.** Actuarial tools like the Static-99R and STABLE-2007 have demonstrated good predictive accuracy, enabling a more nuanced approach to management. This contrasts sharply with the one-size-fits-all policies of the 90s.

**3. Treatment Effectiveness.** Research shows treatment programs significantly reduce recidivism. A 2015 meta-analysis by Schmucker and Lösel found a 26.3% lower sexual recidivism rate of person who participated in treatment programs. This highlights the importance of rehabilitation over purely punitive measures.

**4. Prevention focus.** The current system focuses on tertiary prevention after harm has occurred. Research merits a shift in policy toward primary prevention programs by adding sexual-harm prevention education and prevention programs targeting individuals identified as high-risk.

***The Pennsylvania Legislature must now reform laws to reflect evidence-based practices.***





# REBUILDING COMMUNITY: TRANSFORMING LIVES WITH RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

In a world often defined by disconnection, punishment and retribution, restorative circles offer a compelling alternative: connection, accountability, and healing. Amber Vlangas, a leading voice in restorative justice and a survivor of sexual violence, passionately advocates for this transformative approach. At the 2024 PARSOL Fall Conference, she shared insights into the powerful practice of restorative circles, which bridge the divide between harm and healing.

Amber's journey with restorative justice is deeply personal. As the wife of someone on a registry, she understands the complexities of harm and justice from multiple angles. "My story is not unique," she said during her presentation. "We need to tear down the idea that some people are victims and others are only victimizers." Through her work with Restorative Action Alliance, she champions the humanity of everyone involved, fostering safer communities without relying on punitive systems.

## What Are Restorative Circles?

Restorative circles draw on ancient, cross-cultural practices to create connections, understanding, and healing spaces. Unlike therapy or case management, these circles, which follow a community-building model, are peer-led and emphasize shared lived experiences. Participants engage in structured conversations to build trust, increase empathy, and foster accountability.

There are several foundational roles in a circle: participants, the circle keeper, and the guardian.

- **The circle keeper** is a trained facilitator with shared lived experience. They ensure dialogue flows while participating as an equal.
- **The guardian** monitors the space, intervening as needed, to maintain the circle's agreements and emotional safety.
- **Circle members** participate fully, keeping the circle to shared values.

"The magic of a circle," Amber shared, "is its ability to hold so many things: deep truths, discomfort, joy, and innovation." This versatility and its grounding in collective wisdom make restorative circles a powerful tool for addressing harm and fostering community.

## A Modern Revival of Ancient Practices

Though restorative practices are often seen as a modern innovation, their roots run deep. Indigenous cultures worldwide have long used similar practices to resolve conflicts and build community. From Native American talking circles to Celtic, Asian, and African traditions, these methods emphasize dialogue, accountability, and interconnectedness.

Amber noted, "Circles echo ancient practices that have been employed by cultures worldwide." By adapting these traditions to contemporary challenges, restorative circles offer a pathway to reconnect with values of community and healing that modern systems often neglect.

## The Structure of Restorative Circles

At first glance, the structure of a restorative circle may seem simple, but its intentional design makes it effective. Each session begins and ends with a ceremony—whether it's the ringing of a bell, a moment of silence, or a shared reading. This helps participants transition into and out of the circle's "sacred space," leaving distractions and preconceived notions behind.

*Within the circle, conversations follow a rhythm:*

1. **Welcome and Agreements:** Participants collectively establish guidelines for respectful and meaningful interaction. These agreements ensure everyone feels safe and valued.
2. **Heart Sharing Round:** Using a talking piece—often an object of personal or cultural significance—participants share their responses to a prompt. This slows the conversation, encouraging deep reflection and active listening.
3. **Harvesting Round:** Participants reflect on what resonated with them or pose questions with curiosity and respect.
4. **Closing Ceremony:** The circle concludes w/ a reflective activity, allowing participants to carry the experience. Each element reinforces the circle's purpose: to create a safe, equitable space for connection and growth.

# SHARED AGREEMENTS - CIRCLE



## Who Benefits from Restorative Circles?

Restorative circles have proven effective across diverse contexts. Restorative Action Alliance, for example, offers circles for survivors of sexual harm, people impacted by registries, and their loved ones. The peer-led format fosters deep connections, reducing isolation & shame while building resilience.

One participant described the experience as transformative: "I've never felt safe in a group setting before, but this circle changed that. It's a place where I can share without fear of judgment."

Amber emphasized that the benefits extend beyond personal growth. Circles can also catalyze advocacy, encouraging participants to access their powerful experiences and use their voices to drive systemic change.

## Addressing Challenges and Building Trust

Like any human interaction, restorative circles can encounter challenges. Participants may feel discomfort as they confront differing opinions or revisit painful experiences. Amber acknowledged this reality but stressed that circles are designed to hold such moments with care.

Circle keepers undergo trauma-informed training, equipping them to navigate sensitive situations. The broader organization supports them, ensuring resources are available for participants needing additional help. "The circle doesn't solve every problem," Amber said, "but it provides a space to begin the work."

## Restorative Circles in a Virtual World

Though traditionally held in person, restorative circles have successfully transitioned to virtual spaces, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Restorative Action Alliance has embraced this format, allowing participants from across the country—and even the world—to join. Virtual circles rely on creative adaptations, such as passing a talking piece metaphorically, to maintain the integrity of the practice.

"Technology can't replace the warmth of sitting in a room together," Amber admitted, "but it has expanded access, making these spaces available to people who might not otherwise participate."

## The Ripple Effect of Restorative Circles

The impact of restorative circles goes beyond individual participants. By fostering empathy, accountability, and community, these practices can potentially transform how society addresses harm. One audience member at Amber's workshop remarked, "This has the potential to change the nation. It's exactly what we need."

Amber's vision aligns with this sentiment. She dreams of a world where restorative practices are the norm rather than the exception. "If I had my way," she said, "every person on Earth would be part of a circle."

## Joining the Movement

For those inspired by Amber's work, there are many ways to get involved. Restorative Action Alliance offers training programs for aspiring circle keepers and resources for communities looking to implement restorative practices. The organization also facilitates circles for various groups, creating spaces for healing and growth.

Amber's closing message was clear: restorative circles are not just a tool for resolving conflicts—they are a way of being. "In circle, we discover our collective wisdom," she said. "And that wisdom has the power to transform lives."

Restorative Circles invite us to rethink how we address harm and build community. They remind us of our shared humanity, offering a path toward healing that honors the dignity of all involved. In a world hungry for connection and understanding, this ancient practice feels more relevant—and more necessary—than ever.

- By PARSOL Staff with thanks to Amber Vlangas





# PARSOL 2024 Legal Committee Update

For the first half of 2024, PARSOL and persons forced to register in Pennsylvania were on pins and needles waiting for the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania (SCOPA) to release their opinion on *Com. v. Torsileri II*. When it dropped on May 31st, 373 days after the Court heard the case's final argument, we learned the outcome was not what we hoped. The majority of Pennsylvania's Supreme Court Justices ruled that the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) did not violate the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Constitution Article I, Section 1 (Right to Reputation) and, as a civil regulation SORNA does not constitute criminal punishment.

PARSOL's Legal Committee took time to understand the opinions and provide the best analysis we could. We may have lost this battle, but we continue fighting for fairness, due process, and reliance on empirical evidence in shaping legal standards.

The Legal Committee also heavily contributed research to the Education and Information Committee's publication *Pennsylvania Sexual Offense Laws, Autism, and Other Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*. The report, distributed to other organizations and legislators, informs readers about the need for the PA General Assembly to pass legislation to protect the rights of this special community. Released during the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania's "Autism in Our Courts" month, PARSOL pushed to reform the criminal legal system to consider evidence based research around persons with these disabilities and sexual criminology.

The Legal Committee is also continuing its work:

- Advocating for easier and faster processes for people to petition for removal from the registry.
- Developing provisions to protect those who miss

their registration or mandatory SVP monthly counseling because of medical emergencies or natural disasters,

- Holding Pennsylvania accountable for the promised implementation of registration methods other than in-person visits for those on Subchapter H.

While these changes may not abolish SORNA, it is our intention that they help reduce the negative impact on the lives of individuals required to register, those with sexual offenses in the criminal legal system, and Pennsylvania prison system.

The [PARSOL.org](https://parsol.org) online case tracker is now available at and can help citizens identify relevant sex-offense-related cases that have been selected for arguments before SCOPA. Oral arguments from any SCOPA hearing back to 2020 are accessible on the SCOPA YouTube page.

If you have an educational background in the legal field and would like to join the Legal Committee, please complete the volunteer online application at <https://parsol.org/volunteer>.

- Josiah Krammes, Legal Committee Chair  
([josiah@parsol.org](mailto:josiah@parsol.org))

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*PARSOL continues to seek Pennsylvania attorneys to write informational articles and review prospective appellate cases. Please e-mail [contact@parsol.org](mailto:contact@parsol.org) if you are an interested attorney!*



OUR OPINION

*Les Misérables  
is playing out in  
modern society*

*by Josiah Krammes*





Most of us have heard Pennsylvania's Megan's Law being referred to as the scarlet letter, the mark of Cain, or the Star of David patch that was used in Nazi Germany during WWII to mark out the Jews. But have you considered comparing Megan's Law to the parole papers that Jean Valjean received from Inspector Javert in the timeless tale of *Les Misérables* by Victor Hugo? For this short essay, I will use the *Les Misérables* feature film adaptation that premiered in 2012, directed by Tom Hooper, with the heartfelt performance by Hugh Jackman as Jean Valjean and Russell Crowe as the callous Inspector Javert.

We see Valjean in a chain gang pulling a warship into a dry dock for repairs. As he heads back to the prison with the other prisoners, Inspector Javert tells him his time in chains is over, but his parole is just beginning. Javert tells him to "follow to the letter of your itinerary. This badge of shame you'll show until you die. It warns you're

a dangerous man" (emphasis added).

Valjean disbelievingly explains that he stole some bread to save his young niece from dying of hunger. "You will starve again unless you learn the meaning of the law," argues Javert. "I know the meaning of those 19 years. A slave of the law," replies Valjean. Javert explains it was five years for theft and 14 years for fleeing and eluding the police (he should've

appealed). Javert will only ever see Valjean as inmate 24601. The "badge of shame" he is referring to is his parole paper. No matter where he goes, he must show it to those whom he encounters for their own protection from this "vicious" man who stole a loaf of bread. A loaf of bread! Showing those papers is something he must do for the rest of his life.

Pennsylvania's Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) version (colloquially called "Pennsylvania Megan's Law") currently has the precise idea behind it. It marks and shames everyone who's on it as an offender at a high risk of re-offending, 42 Pa.C.S. §9799.11(a)(4). Even those who have not been convicted of any sexual offense like unlawful restraint, 18 Pa.C.S. §2902(b); false imprisonment, 18 Pa.C.S. §2903(b); interference with custody of a child, 18 Pa.C.S. §2904; are globally branded as "sex offenders." Numerous registrants must register for life.

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## The Bishop

Valjean believes he's walking to freedom, but the chorus keeps singing, "Look down, look down, you'll always be a slave." We're given the undertone: "As long as he exists, his past will always be there to haunt him." Before exploring this "freedom," he sings, "[t]he day begins, and now let's see what this new world will do for me." He had hope in the world, but the world only let him down. He's denied work at a stone quarry, one of the most challenging jobs. He's denied lodging at an inn; he even asks to sleep in the stable and is still rejected. Children throw stones at him, and the police beat him. He did not expect such rejection. All he wants is to be a productive member of society and move on with his life. I don't think any of us on the registry was prepared for how difficult life would become. We put in dozens of applications, a handful of interviews (if that), and constant

rejections. Housing is nearly impossible to find as landlords don't want the reputation of a registrant lover. It seemed all opportunities of re-entering back into society were gone for Valjean. That was until he met Bishop Myriel, played by the remarkable Colm Wilkinson.

Here at a village church, Valjean is finally shown love and compassion. Bishop Myriel takes him to warm up, be

fed, and rest. He tells Valjean, "[t]here is wine to revive you. There is bread to make you strong. There's a bed to rest till morning. Rest from pain, and rest from *wrong*." This holy man sees the hurt in Valjean. He knows that being wronged brings the emotional and psychological pain of being disregarded feeling worthless, powerless, and unloved. He is offering a place of solace for the weary and forsaken outcast. I, myself, as a Catholic and on Megan's Law, am forbidden from participating in the choir, church socials, and serving at Mass in my diocese. The leaders of my diocese have fallen prey to the fears that the legislators and media have put out there to feed the public. The church leaders know what they should morally do but choose not to because they fear judgment from society. I've heard stories of others being thrown out of their churches because of their previous transgressions.

I believe everyone can learn much from Bishop Myriel,



Russell Crowe as Javert and Hugh Jackman as Valjean in the 2012 film adaptation of Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* (Universal Pictures)

especially when Valjean steals silver from the church in the middle of the night, gets caught by the authorities, is brought back to the church for the Bishop to press charges, and, yet here again, the Bishop shows nothing but love and compassion towards Valjean. He gives Valjean the silver with two additional silver candle holders. He saves Valjean from prison and gives him more silver as financial help. Bishop Myriel instructs him, "You must use this precious silver to become an honest man." Bishop Myriel reminds Valjean that there is hope in a dark, cruel, unforgiving world. Compassionate people are few and far between. They can see the real person and understand that everyone deserves a second chance. I have been truly fortunate to find several such people. I hold them near and dear to my heart because I have learned that they are the strongest supporters. They will listen to my frustrations and be there in times of despair. They will give me a hand up when the world wants to put me down.

### Prisoner 24601

Valjean is perplexed and overwhelmed, "If there's another way to go, I missed it 20 long years ago. My life was a war that could never be won. They gave me a number, and they



murdered Valjean when they chained me and left me for dead... Yet why did I allow this man to touch my soul and teach me love? He treated me like any other. He gave me his trust. He called me brother. My life he claims for God above. Can such things be? For I had come to hate the world, this world that always hated me! Take an eye for an eye! Turn your heart into stone! This is all I have lived for! This is all I have known!" He reflects on the love bestowed on him and how contrary it is to the usual ways of the world. The world taught him there is no room to be remorseful and forgiving; only vengeance and callousness pay. He cries out, ponders, and plans, "Sweet Jesus, what have I done? Become a thief in the night; become a dog on the run!

And have I fallen so far, and is the hour so late that nothing remains but the cry of my hate?... Is there another way to go?... I'll escape now from that world; from the world of Jean Valjean. Jean Valjean is nothing now! Another story must begin!" He realizes the system has set him up for failure. He believes the only way to have true freedom in a world that continues to condemn is to rid himself of that identity and take on a new one.

Those of us on the registry know full well where he comes from. The registry intends to protect society, but the result of it leads others to commit more crimes out of desperation to survive. Sometimes, it feels like the best way to escape from an unforgiving world is to vanish and become someone else. We might hide in a prison that we make for ourselves called home. We become hermits because we fear someone recognizing us due to our past. Many times, it feels like isolation is the answer.

### Who am I?

Valjean owns and operates a textile factory with the silver that Bishop Myriel gave him. Because of his business success, he becomes the mayor of a town. He's a man of great character with his new identity, Mayor Madeliene. He gains a predominant status in society that couldn't have been achieved under his old identity. I know many of us could make better lives if given the chance. Before I go further, I must disclaim that I do not suggest absconding as Valjean did. It



Hugh Jackman as Jean Valjean in the *Les Misérables* film (2012) (Universal Pictures)



may look appealing, but two wrongs don't make a right.

Coming back to the story, we are quickly reminded of the less fortunate when the town poor sing, "The righteous hurry past. They don't hear the little ones crying. And the plague is coming on fast, ready to kill. One day nearer to dying." They explain the lack of empathy from those in power for the ones tragically affected by the tense political atmosphere and the plague. This is in deep contrast to what Valjean has become, but it remains a humble reminder of what he once was. As the musical plays on, he's given opportunities to pass on the same love, compassion, and mercy the Bishop showed him years ago. He rescues Fantine from a life of prostitution, takes her to the hospital, and promises to take in her daughter, Cosette, as his own child. He saves Marius from death and spares Javert's life when the revolutionaries want him dead.

Was it right that he was punished unjustly? No! Was it right that he went on the run even though he was able to create a new life where he did a lot of good for others? No! There is a due process that all parties must follow. Our world continues to go down this road of injustice that Valjean experienced. We are like Jean Valjean, forever living a marked life with people like Inspector Javert. Javert grew up in a family of convicts. He detested that lifestyle. He vowed he wouldn't follow in their footsteps. He thought that he could correct his family's wrongs by becoming an officer of the law. Unfortunately, he overcorrected and left out empathy and compassion. He believed convicts could never be changed.

Our legislators have overcorrected and become zealots while, in the process, leaving out empathy, kindness, and compassion. They must remember that most registrants want to better their lives but irrational laws and a society frightened by decades of myths and falsehoods have blocked the provisions to do so. Let Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables* be a lesson for all: unjust punishments are not the answer to correction. True correction must come from true justice with understanding and compassion.

**You can comment** on this article at the PARSOL website at <https://parsol.org/lesmis>.



## Education & Information Committee Update

In 2024, the PARSOL Education and Information Committee focused on increasing the organization's public awareness, establishing and fostering relationships with professionals, and providing increased educational opportunities. We saw this year as a perfect opportunity to achieve these goals by attending and presenting workshops at the Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) Conference, the Northeastern Association of Criminal Justice Sciences (NEACJS) 2024 Annual Conference, and the NARSOL Conference.

In April we hosted a PARSOL Perspectives with Pennsylvania SOAB-Approved treatment provider Dr. Jennifer Weeks. She talked about therapeutic treatment models and advocating for one's own treatment. Also in April, in collaboration with the Legal Committee, we released a special report that focused on individuals with autism spectrum disorders and other intellectual and developmental disabilities who are involved in sexual offense cases. The report and additional infographics were distributed to other organizations and legislators whose passion was to make life within the judicial system better for those with ASD and IDD.

Another major issue we addressed, as 2024 was an election year, was voter disenfranchisement. We conducted a survey of formerly incarcerated members who have been convicted of a crime of sexual nature to examine their knowledge of their voting rights. The results were quite shocking: 54.2% of respondents were falsely informed they could not vote, 23% of respondents stated that voting in-person at their polling place would cause them to violate the terms of their supervised release and could send them back to incarceration. The Pennsylvania Joint State Government Commission published Voting Rights of the Formerly Incarcerated: Knowledge, Outreach, and Data Patterns of Qualified Electors in Pennsylvania on July 12, 2024 which cites PARSOL's research.

We've updated the design and format of PARSOL Quarterly, our newsletter, to easily streamline them into the Pennsylvania Department of Correction's publication distribution system. As a result, we have been able to significantly cut our mailing costs. This Fall we launched a survey to our incarcerated members on the registry to gauge our educational efforts for our members on the 'inside' in 2025. We'll be sending a similar survey to non-incarcerated members in early 2025.

Our committee members and volunteers have worked hard this past year and will continue to do so in the next. If you would like to join the Education Committee, please complete our online volunteer form at <https://parsol.org/volunteer>.

# Building Authentic Change with the Good Lives Model

## A Paradigm Shift in Rehabilitation



The Good Lives Model (GLM) is a revolutionary approach to offender rehabilitation that combines personal fulfillment with risk management. During a recent presentation at the 2024 PARSOL Fall Conference, participants learned about the model and its transformative impact on rehabilitation, particularly for individuals convicted of sexual offenses. The GLM helps individuals create fulfilling, prosocial lives while addressing the root causes of offending behavior.

### Understanding the Good Lives Model

The GLM, developed by Dr. Tony Ward and colleagues, is a strengths-based approach to offender rehabilitation. Unlike traditional models that focus solely on avoiding criminal behavior, the GLM emphasizes building lives worth living—defined by pursuing personal goals and fulfillment. The model revolves around the concept of primary goods: fundamental human needs and aspirations that all people strive to achieve.

The Good Lives Model postulates that people commit offenses because they lack the opportunity or ability to obtain important things in life—things we all need. The problem isn't the desire; it's the method used to achieve it.

### Primary Goods of the Good Lives Model

The Good Lives Model identifies eleven primary goods or areas that contribute to a good life:

1. **Life:** Healthy living and physical safety.
2. **Knowledge:** The desire for understanding/learning.
3. **Excellence in Play:** Engagement in hobbies and recreational activities.
4. **Excellence in Work:** Achieving mastery & accomplishment in one's vocation.
5. **Excellence in Agency:** Autonomy & the ability to make choices.
6. **Inner Peace:** Emotional regulation & mental wellness.
7. **Relatedness:** Intimacy & meaningful relationships.
8. **Community:** A sense of belonging & social inclusion.
9. **Spirituality:** Seeking meaning & purpose.
10. **Happiness:** A sense of contentment & satisfaction.
11. **Creativity:** Expressing oneself in innovative ways.

### Offending Behavior: Pathways to Harm

Offending behavior typically arises from barriers to achieving these goods through lawful, prosocial means. The GLM framework categorizes offending pathways as direct and indirect pathways. Direct pathways are when individuals actively pursue a primary good (e.g., intimacy) but use harmful methods to achieve it. Indirect pathways are when offenses occur as a byproduct of unrelated pursuits or coping strategies, such as substance abuse.

For instance, someone struggling with social anxiety might seek connection through inappropriate online interactions, while another individual might resort to theft to fulfill basic survival needs. The GLM emphasizes addressing both the unmet need and the offending pathway.



## The Role of Rehabilitation

Under the GLM, rehabilitation's goals are twofold: managing risk and promoting personal well-being. Dr. Weeks emphasized that rehabilitation is not merely about preventing re-offense but also about empowering individuals to lead fulfilling lives.

## Individualized Assessment and Planning

The GLM takes an individualized approach to treatment. Therapists work with clients to:

- Identify which primary goods are most meaningful.
- Understand barriers that led to offending behavior.
- Develop strategies to achieve these goods in lawful, prosocial ways.

The Good Lives Model integrates dynamic risk management, focusing on changing factors such as emotional regulation, interpersonal skills, and coping mechanisms.

According to Jennifer Weeks, Ph.D., LPC, CSAT-S, CAADC, CMAT, a SOAB-approved treatment provider from Bethlehem, Pa. who utilizes GLM concepts in her treatment program, "Avoidance isn't sustainable. We need to teach individuals how to live fulfilling, authentic lives while managing their impulses and risks."

## Barriers to Fulfillment

Additional barriers may exist for returning citizens, individuals under community supervision, and persons with criminal records or registry requirements. These barriers may include restrictions that prevent them from utilizing traditional learning models and educational pathways, finding a job or thriving in a career, seeking a community, including those of faith or service, etc. Treatment providers can often connect clients with resources and navigators who can help identify lawful, creative solutions to these challenges.

Obstacles can be broken down into three categories:

- *Systemic Obstacles:* Offenders often face societal stigma, legal restrictions, and limited access to resources like employment and housing.
- *Internal Deficits:* Trauma, poor emotional regulation, and a lack of coping skills frequently impair individuals' ability to pursue their goals.
- *Conflicting Goals:* A person who pursues one primary good may inadvertently hinder another. For example, someone prioritizing community involvement might struggle to navigate related probation restrictions.

These barriers increase dynamic risk, which can change over time, influencing the likelihood of reoffense.

## Implementing the GLM

The GLM is not a standalone program but a framework that integrates with other rehabilitation models, including 20 - PARSOL.org

ing the Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) model. The RNR model identifies and addresses criminogenic needs (factors directly linked to offending), while the GLM expands the focus to include personal strengths and aspirations.

## Key Components of GLM-Based Treatment

- *Skill Building:* Enhancing emotional regulation, interpersonal communication, & problem-solving abilities.
- *Goal Setting:* Helping clients articulate their values and create personalized good life plans.
- *Support Systems:* Facilitating connections to community resources, social networks, and supportive environments.

## Applications and Evidence

The model has been implemented in various contexts, including programs for sexual offenders, adolescents, and individuals with mental health issues. Research shows promising outcomes, including improved quality of life for participants, enhanced motivation for change, and reduced recidivism rates.

Dr. Weeks emphasizes the role of creativity in rehabilitation. "When clients reconnect with creative outlets—whether it's music, painting, or cooking—it provides a sense of purpose and fulfillment that reduces the appeal of harmful behaviors," she said.

## Challenges and Advocacy

Despite its evidence-based foundation, the GLM faces resistance in some jurisdictions. Probation officers and treatment providers rooted in punitive models may view its emphasis on well-being as being "soft" on offenders, but education and evidence-based results can often move such individuals toward taking another look, since the GLM isn't about excusing behavior; it's about addressing root causes and equipping individuals to live better lives.

## A Paradigm Shift in Rehabilitation

The Good Lives Model represents a shift from punitive to rehabilitative justice, offering a framework that prioritizes human dignity and personal growth. By addressing the underlying needs that drive offending behavior, the GLM helps individuals avoid reoffending and build fulfilling, authentic lives.

Treatment providers and community members need to make a paradigm shift: Rehabilitation is about more than managing risk. It's about helping people become the best versions of themselves. When we focus on strengths and possibilities, we create opportunities for real, lasting change.

- By PARSOL Staff with thanks to Dr. Jennifer Weeks

# PARSOL: Death Penalty Proposal is Unethical and Unconstitutional; puts Children at Risk

By Josiah Krammes

In late 2024, Pa. State Representative Ryan Warner (R-Fayette County) proposed legislation that would allow the death penalty for individuals convicted of child rape. This measure has drawn sharp criticism from various advocacy groups, including the Pennsylvania Assoc. for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (PARSOL), which argues that the proposal is fraught with ethical, legal, and practical problems.

## A Call for Protection

The protection of children is a paramount concern shared by all Pennsylvanians. However, PARSOL emphasizes that while the intent behind Warner's proposal is to safeguard vulnerable children, the approach may ultimately do more harm than good. We all want to protect children from heinous crimes, but must consider the implications of such extreme measures.

## Ethical Concerns Surrounding the Death Penalty

One of the primary ethical concerns raised by PARSOL is the risk of wrongful convictions. The criminal justice system is not infallible, and numerous cases have highlighted instances where innocent individuals have been wrongfully convicted, particularly in high-stakes emotional cases like sexual offenses. The irreversible nature of the death penalty means that a single mistake could lead to catastrophic and irrevocable consequences.

Moreover, studies suggest that a possibility of the death penalty may discourage victims from coming forward who want to see a perpetrator punished, but not killed. This is especially true in cases where the person causing harm is a family member or someone known to the victim—a scenario that accounts for approximately 93% of cases. Instead of supporting victims, this policy risks silencing them and compounding their trauma.

## Legal Precedents and Implications

Beyond ethical concerns, Warner's proposal faces significant legal challenges. It directly conflicts with established legal precedent set by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Kennedy v. Louisiana* (2008), which ruled that the death penalty for crimes where the victim does not die is unconstitutional. Attempting to circumvent this binding precedent could embroil Pennsylvania in costly legal battles without providing any tangible benefits to public safety.

Additionally, there are serious questions about whether such legislation would violate constitutional protections against cruel and unusual punishment as outlined in the Eighth Amendment. The principle of proportionality suggests that applying the death penalty to non-homicidal crimes may not meet constitutional standards.

## Impact on Marginalized Communities

Another critical aspect of this debate is how the death penalty disproportionately affects marginalized communities. Research consistently shows that economic and racial inequities plague its application, ensuring that wealthier



individuals often escape its consequences while vulnerable populations bear the brunt of this ultimate sanction. The death penalty does not serve justice; it serves to perpetuate systemic inequalities.

## Concerns from Law Enforcement Officials

Even law enforcement officials have raised red flags about Warner's proposal. Beaver County District Attorney Nate Bible warned imposing the death penalty might inadvertently incentivize perpetrators to kill victims to avoid detection. This underscores a tragic potential consequence that could heighten danger rather than protect children.

## Advocating for Evidence-Based Solutions

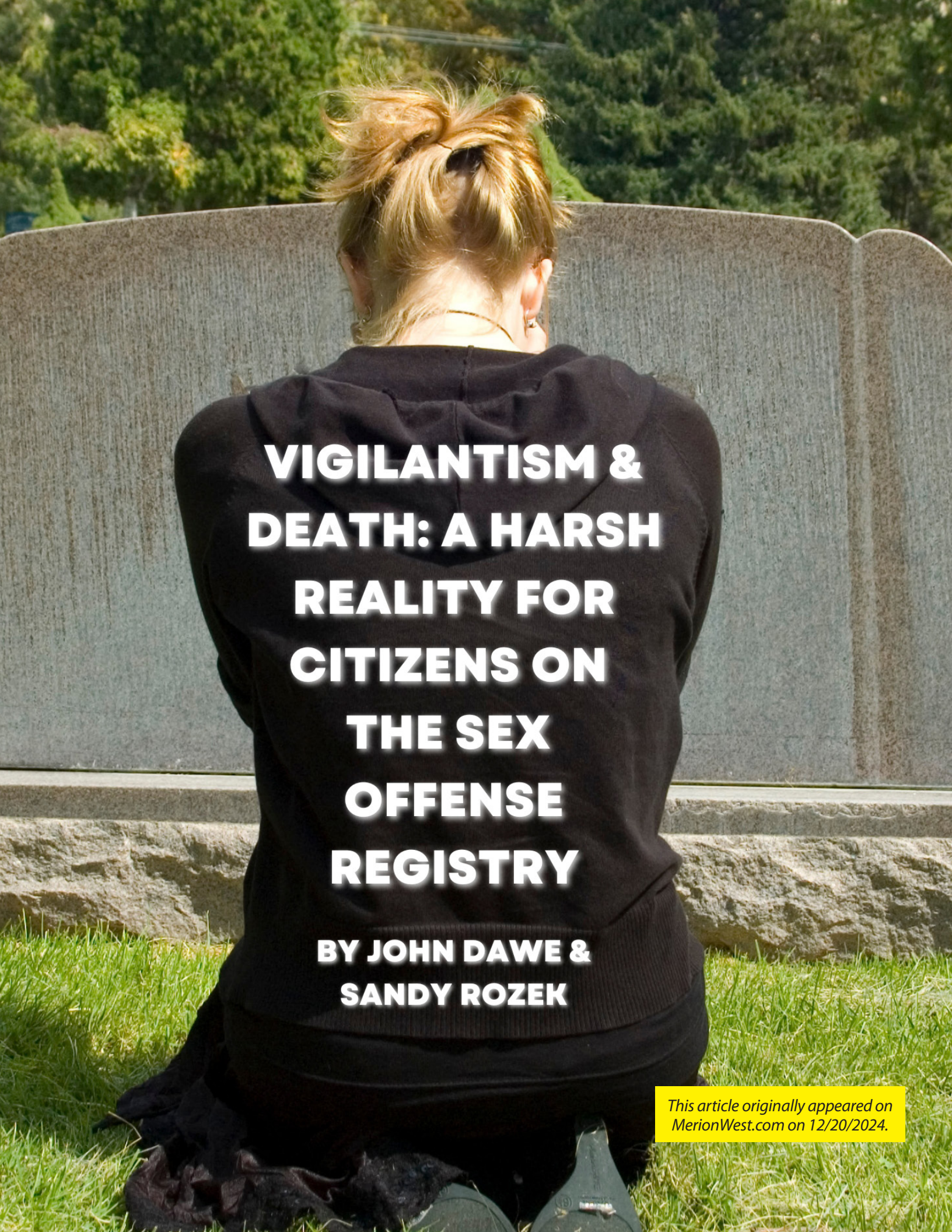
In light of these concerns, PARSOL advocates for alternative approaches that focus on prevention and support rather than punitive measures. Proposed solutions include:

- **Expanding Prevention Programs:** Investing in education and outreach initiatives aimed at reducing incidents of sexual abuse.
- **Enhancing Support for Survivors:** Providing resources and support systems for survivors to help them heal and rebuild their lives after trauma.
- **Ensuring Fair Sentencing:** Advocating for fair sentencing practices that hold offenders accountable while allowing for rehabilitation where appropriate.

Protecting children is too important to be undermined by measures that defy constitutional principles, ethical norms, and practical realities. PARSOL urges lawmakers to reject Warner's dangerous proposal in favor of evidence-based reforms that truly safeguard communities.

As Pennsylvania grapples with this contentious issue, lawmakers face a critical decision: how best to protect children without compromising ethical standards or legal principles. The ongoing debate highlights a broader conversation about justice, accountability, and the complexities of addressing sexual violence in society. With advocates like PARSOL leading the charge for rational reforms, there remains hope for solutions that prioritize both protection and dignity for all involved.





**VIGILANTISM &  
DEATH: A HARSH  
REALITY FOR  
CITIZENS ON  
THE SEX  
OFFENSE  
REGISTRY**

**BY JOHN DAWE &  
SANDY ROZEK**

*This article originally appeared on  
MerionWest.com on 12/20/2024.*



Portez Smith arrived outside Jesse Grover's Pennsylvania duplex early on Sunday, November 17th of this year, yelling through the closed door, "Grover, you're a f—ing pedophile." When Grover opened the door, Smith pulled out a gun and shot him to death. Grover was registered on Pennsylvania's sex offender registry as a Tier I offender. This holiday season, Grover leaves behind his wife, parents, four siblings, four stepchildren, and numerous other family members. He is remembered for his sweet smile and as a beloved family member, a good friend, and a lover of reading, cooking, and music.

Grover's murder is not the first registrant to face such a fate. Gary Blanton was a young married father living in the state of Washington when, in 2012, Patrick Drum shot him to death for being on the Washington registry for a consensual sexual act with another minor from 12 years prior. Drum then went to the home of registrant Jerry Ray and killed him. With the Washington sex offender registry in hand, he was on the way to shoot a third registrant when apprehended.

Charles and Gretchen Parker were at their South Carolina home when Jeremy and Christine Moody stopped in front of their house and raised the hood of their car. Charles was a mechanic and went outside to help. The Moodys entered their home and slaughtered both Charles, a South Carolina registrant, and his wife Gretchen (who was not on a registry), with a gun and knife. Like Drum, they already had targeted their next victim, another person on the sex offender registry, when they were apprehended. In the wake of these murders, the National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL) asked then-Governor Nikki Haley to have the home addresses of registrants removed from the public view of the online registry. The request was disregarded.

Smith's rant at Grover reveals almost as much about his beliefs as his senseless act of violence does. It is commonly believed that everyone on a registry has a sexual offense against a child. This is not the case. In every state, virtually every crime that can have a sexual component carries with it an obligation to register. In many states,

non-sexual crimes require registration. And, in some states, many of those required to register are minors. Blanton was the same age as his teenage girlfriend when he was convicted for consensual sex with her. (Her parents

class tracked, except murder.

The more long-term fix is not an easy one. It involves changing hearts and minds toward a willingness to put aside emotional responses and adopt a rational approach. Several decades

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***The most disturbing factor about these murders is that a segment of the community views these vigilantes as heroes.***

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had pushed for an arrest when they learned of the relationship.) Statistics suggest that a third of the offenders against minors are themselves minor. Children have been put on a registry as young as 8.

The most concerning factor about these murders is that a segment of the community views these vigilantes as heroes. Social media and online articles about these incidents boast ten or even 20 comments praising the vigilante for each one condemning the act of violence. Recently, the glorification of "predator catchers" has driven groups of gangs and teenagers to show up at registrants' homes to "carry out justice." Numerous studies document various degrees of violence and harassment registrants and their family members face daily.

Blanton's wife publicly asked that Drum's supporters stop the harassment of her and her children. According to CBS News, the judge at Drum's hearing admonished those who were in the courtroom in support of Drum. Leslie said she and her family had been spat upon, had things thrown at their car, had their house targeted, and more.

***So what is the answer?*** The first, quickest, and most straightforward answer is a "band-aid" measure that NARSOL asked South Carolina to take: remove the home and business addresses from public view. This will at least require vigilantes to work a little harder to achieve their goals. Supporters of the registry argue that knowing where registrants live protects their communities, but the United States Department of Justice reports that more than 93% of the cases of sexual harm of juveniles are committed by someone known to the victim, and, according to one study, 95% of offenders in the State of New York were not registrants. Additionally research shows that sex crimes have the lowest recidivism rates of any crime

of evidence-based data show us the sex offender registry is ineffective at every level. It does not make communities safer, protect children from sexual abuse, help those who have caused harm, or heal those who have been harmed. Instead, it puts families of registrants in harm's way, impedes rehabilitation, destroys opportunities to rebuild damaged lives, while also costing taxpayers.

One bright spot on the horizon is the increasing prevalence of restorative justice programs. These alternatives to harsh punishment for offenders and nothing for those offended bring the two sides together—for those who choose it—to dialogue, understand each other better, express remorse and forgiveness, and pave the road for future reconciliation. Because so much sexual harm happens within families, this is an excellent choice.

Most legislators claim to be fiscally responsible, data-informed, and against unfunded mandates. Yet they forget this words when proposing laws and restrictions (such as residence, proximity, and Halloween restrictions) that affect persons required to register. Politicians wanting to project a "tough on crime" platform turn to sex crimes because society's taboo on anything sexual combined with the visceral nature of sex crimes causes electors and officials to abandon rationality for emotionalism. Meaningful reform will begin when enough citizens protest the waste of human lives and public monies and when decision-makers at *all levels* adopt evidence-based solutions to preventing sexual harm, as well as rehabilitating those with past sexual offenses.

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**Sandy Rozek** is Communications Director at NARSOL, and **John Dawe** is Marketing Director at NARSOL and PARSOL Managing Director.





## 2024 YEAR IN *Review*

By Brenda Jones, NARSOL Executive Director & Sandy Rozek, NARSOL Communications Director

The National Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (NARSOL) has had a transformative year in 2024, marked by significant litigation efforts, impactful advocacy, and educational initiatives aimed at reforming sexual offense laws and addressing societal misconceptions. As the organization continues to champion evidence-based policies and constitutional rights, its work has touched on critical issues such as parole restrictions, housing rights, and public awareness campaigns.

### Litigation Efforts: Fighting for Justice

NARSOL's litigation efforts in 2024 have been pivotal in challenging unconstitutional laws and practices. One of the most notable cases is *NARSOL et al. v. Latoya Hughes*, before the Seventh Circuit Court of Appeals. This case challenges Illinois' parole condition prohibiting individuals on supervised release for sexual offenses from using or possessing erectile dysfunction medication. NARSOL argues that such restrictions are unconstitutional and infringe on fundamental human rights. The organization aims to overturn precedent that limits civil rights challenges to parole conditions.

In another case, *Antrim v. Carr*, NARSOL supported plaintiffs challenging Wisconsin's lifetime GPS monitoring requirements for individuals convicted of sexual offenses. This case underscores the organization's commitment to addressing overly punitive measures that extend beyond criminal supervision. By subsidizing expert witnesses, NARSOL has strengthened the plaintiffs' case and highlighted the broader implications of such policies on civil liberties.

### Advocacy for Policy Reform

NARSOL has continued to advocate for fairer policies that promote reintegration rather than perpetual punishment, vocally calling out the ineffectiveness of sex offender registries in enhancing public safety and calling for their abolition. In October, NARSOL addressed sensationalized media coverage around Halloween, emphasizing the lack of evidence supporting such laws and noting that registrants harmed no children during Halloween activities.

Housing rights also emerged as a key advocacy focus this year. NARSOL criticized government spending on evicting individuals based on past convictions, arguing that stable housing is crucial for successful reintegration into society. These efforts align with NARSOL's broader mission to challenge policies that marginalize individuals with past convictions and hinder their ability to rebuild their lives.

### Educational Initiatives and Public Engagement

Education remains a cornerstone of NARSOL's work. In 2024, NARSOL state affiliates AZRSOL (Arizona) and PARSOL (Pennsylvania) each hosted inaugural public policy conferences. These events brought together experts, policymakers, and advocates to discuss evidence-based approaches to reforming sexual offense laws in 24 - PARSOL.org

their respective states.

Throughout the year, NARSOL published articles addressing critical issues such as interstate travel challenges for registrants, proposed legislation like Pennsylvania's alarming death penalty proposal for certain sexual offenses, and personal stories highlighting the human impact of current laws. These efforts aim to inform the public and policymakers about the real-world consequences of punitive measures while advocating for more rational alternatives.

### Addressing Misconceptions & Promoting Awareness

NARSOL has worked tirelessly to counter misinformation about individuals on registries and to promote a more nuanced understanding of sexual offense laws. For example, the organization highlighted how technological advancements have created new challenges in addressing child sexual abuse while emphasizing the need for systemic solutions rather than punitive measures.

Editorial "Sex offender registries don't make us any safer; abolishing them would" resonated widely this year, sparking meaningful conversations about the societal costs of maintaining these registries. Similarly, "The nonsense of 'sex offender' employment restrictions" shed light on barriers faced by registrants in securing employment—a critical factor in reducing recidivism.

### A Call for Whole-System Solutions

In line with global conversations about addressing child sexual abuse through a whole-system approach, NARSOL advocates for comprehensive strategies that go beyond punitive measures. NARSOL also recognizes the importance of supporting survivors while ensuring that justice systems focus resources on addressing high-risk offenders rather than low-level cases. By advocating for smarter allocation of resources and evidence-based interventions, NARSOL has aligned itself with broader global efforts.

### Looking Ahead

As 2024 comes to a close, NARSOL remains steadfast in its mission to reform sexual offense laws through litigation, advocacy, and education. This year, the organization's work has challenged unconstitutional practices and fostered meaningful dialogue about how society can better address issues related to sexual offenses while upholding human rights.

With ongoing litigation efforts, advocacy for policy reform, and educational initiatives aimed at dispelling myths and promoting rational solutions, NARSOL is poised to make even greater strides in 2025. Through its unwavering commitment to justice and evidence-based policies, NARSOL is helping pave the way for a fairer legal system and a safer society.

# Reciprocating Hope Through Mail

## PARSOL Advocates Chair Message

An unfamiliar letter arrived in our mailbox last month, and my mind was taken back to the Federal Correctional Institution. I remember Mail Call and walking over to the front of the prison dorm where the Corrections Officer had a large sack full of letters, magazines, and books.

I was one of the lucky ones, as I had people who supported me and took the time to write to me. There were plenty of guys who didn't bother getting up from their bed because they knew there was nothing in that bag for them, but I could reasonably expect that my name might be called. When the CO announced, "Hayes!" I would step forward and claim my paper prize.

I loved getting messages from family or friends, and a new graphic novel really made my day. But the most important letters that I got seemed to be the ones about my future. What was going to happen once I left prison? What obstacles would I have to face? Who could I turn to for help and support and to guide me through the tangled web of registry laws?

The *NARSOL Digest*, a bimonthly newsletter focused on Registry reform, was a beacon of light in a sometimes dark place. Although it didn't talk about my home state of PA exclusively, I got little bits of info that assured me that there was a community out there and I was not alone. *The Digest* was so important to me while I was behind the fence.

I have been out of prison since 2014 and recently timed-out and was removed from the registry. I am now in a position where I can help write a newsletter, exclusively for Pennsylvanians, that gives them the kind of hope and support that I valued so much when I was serving my sentence.

It all came full circle when I opened this odd letter containing a check inside from the United States Treasury made out to PARSOL. Looking closer, I saw that PARSOL had been sent \$25 from an inmate within the Bureau of Prisons. This person made a note: *Annual Dues Payment*. **Incredible.**

I'd like to take a moment to thank the *volunteers* who write the PARSOL publications, the *donors* whose gifts allow us to print and mail them, and the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections *Secure Processing Center staff* for working with us to distribute them as periodicals, saving us significant time, money, and environmental impact. If you are reading this from a correctional facility, I hope this publication helps you as much as *the Digest* helped me more than decade ago.

- Randall Hayes, Chair, PARSOL Advocates





# "WE CAN'T ARREST OUR WAY OUT OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE"

One of the Pennsylvania Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (PARSOL)'s top priorities is to ensure our communities and leaders recognize that sexual harm is a preventable public health issue, a significant paradigm shift from society's predisposed criminal justice response. In support of this priority, PARSOL staff and key volunteers attend relevant conferences and workshops. On June 25-26, 2024, PARSOL staff joined more than 250 researchers and advocates at the **Moore Center for the Prevention of Child Sexual Abuse** annual *Envision* conference, "The Future of Prevention."

This inspiring, challenging, and motivating two-day conference featuring the latest research, practice, and experience in the prevention of child sexual abuse where MOORE unveiled its new *Prevention Global* hub and deep dive series of knowledge resources exploring challenges and opportunities in perpetration prevention.

In a compelling keynote address, **Simon Bailey, QPM, DL, CBE**, chair of the International Policing and Public Protection Research Institute and Director of Strategic Engagement at the Child Rescue Coalition, presented a strong case for a shift in addressing child sexual abuse, particularly in the online realm. Bailey's call for a "whole system approach," resonates with PARSOL's 2025 policy and legislative agenda, which emphasizes prevention, treatment, and healing as viable alternatives to purely punitive measures. Bailey's remarks align with PARSOL's assertion that the current criminal justice-focused approach, particularly the sex offender registry, has been ineffective in significantly reducing sexual abuse or recidivism.

>>>

by John Dawe, MNA, CNP, RCP, RCPF



## The Ineffectiveness of Current Approaches

During his presentation, Bailey made a bold statement: "We cannot arrest our way out of this problem," he said.

This echoes PARSOL's stance on the limitations of the criminal justice system in addressing sexual harm. He notes that despite leading what he described as "the world's leading response to the enforcement threat," the number of victims and offenders kept growing month after month.

Time and time again, we see examples that show the registry causing more harm than good. A 2022 study by the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections found that the keys to

preventing recidivism were effective housing, employment, and community involvement. However, a 2023 PARSOL survey revealed that nine out of ten respondents found their listing on the Pennsylvania Megan's Law Registry and/or parole/probation-imposed restrictions are significant barriers to these very factors.



Simon Bailey, QPM, DL, CBE

## A Public Health Approach

Both Bailey and The Moore Center advocate for treating sexual harm as a public health issue rather than a criminal justice response. This approach involves understanding the root causes and risk factors associated with sexual harm and implementing proactive measures to mitigate its occurrence.

PARSOL's legislative agenda outlines several strategies that align with this public health approach:

- Comprehensive, age-appropriate sexual harm education
- Promotion of healthy relationships and consent culture
- Primary prevention and strategies to safely address individuals with higher risk of causing harm or being harmed in a sex-related offense
- Providing access to mental health support/resources
- Addressing social norms perpetuating sexual violence
- Implementing trauma-informed policies/interventions
- Inclusion of strengths-based programs over shame-based punitive measures

Bailey's presentation reinforced the importance of these strategies, particularly emphasizing the need for early education and awareness about online safety and sexual harm prevention for children and parents.

## Evidence-Based Solutions

A key point of Bailey's presentation is the emphasis on evidence-based solutions. Bailey stressed the importance of understanding "what works" and "what doesn't work" in prevention and intervention programs. This aligns with PARSOL's call to base legislation and public policy on evidence-based solutions, including the use of validated risk assessment methods and research-supported tools,

Furthermore, PARSOL continually argues against Pennsylvania's one-size-fits-all policies, advocating instead for judicial discretion in sentencing based on the specific circumstances of each case and person which Bailey's remarks

support.

## Big Tech Responsibility

Bailey devoted significant attention to the role of technology and big tech companies in the proliferation of child sexual abuse material (CSAM). He argued that technology-related companies have consistently prioritized profit over child safety, despite having the technological capabilities to better protect children.

## Support for Victims and Frontline Workers

Bailey passionately argued for increased investment in supporting survivors of child sexual abuse and providing robust mental health support for frontline workers exposed to CSAM. In Pennsylvania, this is reflected in the Trauma-Informed PA initiative, known as "HEAL PA," which calls for comprehensive programs to build resilience in schools and communities and fund treatment programs.

Additionally, ensuring that experts provide frontline workers who deal with perpetrators of sexual harm with updated information and evidence-based research and best practices for dealing with this critical public health crisis.

Simon Bailey's keynote address at The Moore Center's 2024 Envision Conference presents a compelling case for a paradigm shift in addressing child sexual abuse that aligns closely with PARSOL's agenda. Both emphasize the need for a public health approach, evidence-based solutions, and a focus on prevention and healing rather than purely punitive measures. By attending such conferences and advocating for these approaches, PARSOL demonstrates its commitment to creating more effective, humane, and just responses to sexual harm in society.



### Sexual Addiction Treatment Services

When an individual's problematic sexual behavior crosses a legal boundary, and they engage in illegal sexual activities, such as the use of child sexual abuse materials, online solicitation, indecent exposure, voyeurism, and contact offending, finding a provider who provides treatment through all stages of the criminal process from first investigation through completion of probation is essential. SATS provides both individual and group therapy and an **Pennsylvania SOAB-approved 'Sex Offender' Treatment Provider**.

At SATS, our **Certified Sex Addiction Therapists (CSATs)** use a solutions-focused approach in a safe non-judgmental environment where clients explore, grow, and become successful in different areas of life.

SATS works in conjunction with attorneys and probation and parole, depending on what stage in the process a client is in, and is an approved treatment provider for the following jurisdictions:

**PA Counties:** Berks, Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Lehigh, Luzerne, Montgomery, Monroe, Schuylkill **and Federal Courts:** Eastern District of PA, District of NJ

<b>Bethlehem</b> 190 Brodhead Road, Suite 107 Bethlehem, PA 18017	<b>Plymouth Meeting</b> 1000 Germantown Pike, F-5, Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462
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**☎: 610-844-7180**

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Jennifer Weeks Ph.D. LPC, CAADC, CSAT-S, CMAT  
ToniAnn Eisman, MA, ATR-BC, LPC, CAADC, CSAT  
Patti Hoyt, LPC, CAADC, CSAT, CSOTS  
Elijah Irving, LPC, CAADC, CSAT  
Michael Williams, MS, LPC, CSAT-C

Virtual Telehealth Sessions Also Available



# ***PARSOL Report: Voting Rights Restored but Barriers Remain for Registrants in PA and Beyond***

A new study by PARSOL reveals that while Pennsylvania has made strides in restoring voting rights to formerly incarcerated individuals, significant obstacles still prevent many from exercising their right to vote. The findings highlight a disconnect between state policy and on-the-ground realities for those reentering society after serving time.

## **Voting Rights Automatically Restored, But Confusion Persists**

In Pennsylvania, voting rights are automatically restored upon release from incarceration for a felony conviction. Individuals on probation, parole, or released from a correctional facility are eligible to register and vote. However, a survey conducted by the Pennsylvania Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws (PARSOL) found widespread misinformation about voting eligibility among formerly incarcerated people.

According to PARSOL's survey of 61 formerly incarcerated members, over half (54.2%) were incorrectly told that their criminal history prevented them from voting after release. Even more concerning, 26.02% received this false information from Department of Corrections employees, parole officers, or probation officers.

"This level of misinformation coming from officials is deeply troubling," said John Dawe, Managing Director of PARSOL and survey author. "It effectively disenfranchises eligible voters who are trying to reintegrate into society and exercise their civic rights."

## **Desire to Vote Remains Strong**

Despite the obstacles, the survey found a strong desire for civic engagement among formerly incarcerated individuals. Nearly 88% had registered to vote prior to

incarceration, and 93% planned to vote after release. Notably, 65.52% reported that their involvement with the justice system actually increased their desire to participate in the electoral process.

These findings align with broader research on voting patterns among the formerly incarcerated. A study cited in a 2024 Pennsylvania Joint State Government Commission report found that registration and voting rates for this population are substantial when eligible, averaging 50% for registration and 39.7% for voting across several states.

## **Practical Barriers to Voting**

While legal barriers to voting have been removed in Pennsylvania, the PARSOL survey uncovered significant practical obstacles that prevent many from casting ballots. Chief among these are proximity restrictions often imposed on individuals with sex-related offenses.

Approximately 23% of respondents stated that voting in-person at their polling place would cause them to violate the terms of their supervised release, potentially resulting in re-incarceration. This is because many polling places are located in schools, libraries, or other venues that some formerly incarcerated individuals are barred from approaching.

One survey respondent explained: "I don't vote anymore because my polling place is at a school, and I prefer to vote in person. All I want to do is vote and leave but can't under supervision."

While mail-in voting offers an alternative, some express frustration at being unable to participate in the traditional voting process. "These restrictions effectively create a second-class voting status for many formerly incarcerated individuals," Dawe noted.



## A National Perspective

Pennsylvania's challenges reflect a broader national issue with felony disenfranchisement. According to a 2024 report from The Sentencing Project, an estimated 4 million Americans are disenfranchised due to a felony conviction. While this number has declined by 31% since 2016 as more states enact policies to curtail the practice, it still represents a significant portion of the electorate. This report found that one out of 59 adult citizens – 1.7% of the total U.S. voting eligible population – is disenfranchised due to a current or previous felony conviction. Seven out of 10 of these disenfranchised individuals are living in their communities, having fully completed their sentences or remaining supervised while on probation or parole.

## Global Comparisons Highlight U.S. Outlier Status

When viewed in a global context, the United States stands out for its restrictive policies on voting rights for those with criminal convictions. A 2024 report by Human Rights Watch examined the laws of 136 countries with populations over 1.5 million and found that the majority – 73 out of 136 – never or rarely deny a person's right to vote because of a conviction.

"The United States remains out of step with the rest of the world in disenfranchising large numbers of people based on criminal convictions," the report states. "In part, this is due to a punitive criminal legal system resulting in one of the world's highest incarceration rates."

## Recommendations for Improvement

Based on their survey findings, PARSOL has put forth several recommendations to address the gap between policy and practice:

- Provide clear, easy-to-understand documentation about voting rights to every individual upon release from incarceration.

- Enact laws or policies requiring parole and probation officers to make accommodations for supervised persons to vote.
- Include voting rights information in correspondence sent to remind registrants about their registration deadlines.
- Make it illegal for reentry housing providers to deny eligible electors time to vote.
- Mandate voting rights education as required training for all correctional personnel, including officers and agents at state and county levels.
- These recommendations align with broader efforts nationwide to expand voting access for formerly incarcerated individuals. Since 2016, at least 24 states have enacted policies to reduce felony disenfranchisement, according to The Sentencing Project.

## Looking Ahead

As Pennsylvania and other states grapple with these issues, experts emphasize the importance of civic engagement in successful reentry.

"Voting supports successful reentry by affirming that the voices of people matter," noted supporters of California's Proposition 17, which restored voting rights to parolees in 2020.

With continued advocacy and policy reform, the hope is that the right to vote – a fundamental pillar of democracy – will be fully realized for all eligible citizens, regardless of their past involvement with the criminal justice system.

As one survey respondent aptly stated: "All I want to do is vote and leave."<sup>1</sup> For many formerly incarcerated individuals in Pennsylvania and across the nation, that simple act of civic participation remains unnecessarily complicated.

- by PARSOL Staff

## Who can register and vote in Pennsylvania?

### You can register & vote if you:

- Will be at least 18 years old at the time of the election, a US citizen for at least one month before the election, and a PA resident for at least 30 days before the election.
- Are a pretrial detainee. This means that you can register and vote even if you are confined in a correctional facility awaiting trial on charges of a felony or a misdemeanor, so long as you have not been sentenced to incarceration or are not currently serving a sentence for a felony conviction.
- Are currently serving a sentence for a misdemeanor conviction only unless the misdemeanor was a violation of the PA Election Code.
- Have a felony conviction and were released or will be released from a correctional facility by the date of the next election. You only need to wait for release if your term of incarceration is for conviction of a felony.
- Are on probation or released on parole. This includes parolees living in a halfway house.
- Are under house arrest (home confinement). If this is you, you can vote no matter your conviction status or the status of the conditions of confinement.

### You can NOT register and vote if you:

- Are currently confined in a correctional facility for conviction of a felony and will not get released from confinement until after the next election.
- Were convicted of violating any provision of the Pennsylvania Election Code within 4 years.
- *When registering to vote, you cannot use a correctional facility or a halfway house as your residence address where you live. However, you may use these locations as the address for receiving your mail ballot.*

*Source: <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/vote/voter-support/your-rights-and-the-law/criminal-status-and-voting.html>*



# PARSOL ADVOCATES UPDATE

PARSOL Advocates made significant strides in 2024, advancing its mission to reform sexual offense laws and policies. Through legislative engagement, public education, and a successful Fall Conference, PARSOL has sparked crucial conversations and driven progress toward a more just and practical approach to preventing sexual harm and supporting rehabilitation.

## Lobby Day

On April 30, 2024, PARSOL's leadership and volunteers converged on the Pennsylvania State Capitol in Harrisburg. Legislative Director/Advocates Chair Randall Hayes, Managing Director John Dawe, and eight dedicated volunteers engaged in discussions with dozens of Senators, Representatives, and staff. These meetings focused on promoting rational reform measures to enhance community and family safety, presenting a comprehensive set of legislative requests based on evidence-based approaches.

PARSOL's advocacy centered around several core principles, including:

- Reframing Sexual Harm as Preventable
- Evidence-Based Policy Making
- Inclusive Legislation and Policy, including removal of carve-outs
- Specific support for elderly and aging registrants and those with intellectual disabilities
- Trauma-Informed Approaches and Use of Person-First Terminology
- Registry Reform, including clarifying SVP determination, pathways off the registry, and use of risk-based assessment

## Ongoing Challenges

While PARSOL's efforts have sparked meaningful dialogues, challenges remain. The exclusion of individuals with sexual offenses from recent reform bills highlights

ongoing stigma. However, PARSOL's emphasis on evidence-based approaches has gained traction, prompting some lawmakers to reconsider long-held public safety and rehabilitation assumptions.

## PARSOL Fall Conference: A Milestone Event

A highlight of PARSOL's advocacy year was the 2024 Fall Conference, featuring State Representative Emily Kinkead (D-20/Allegheny County) as the keynote speaker. As Chair of the Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime and Corrections, Rep. Kinkead's participation underscored the growing attention to rational reform in sexual offense laws.

In her address, Rep. Kinkead emphasized several key points that aligned with PARSOL's mission:

1. The critical importance of evidence-based policy-making in crafting effective legislation.
2. The need for policies supporting successful reentry and recidivism reduction.
3. Expanding mental health resources and implementing trauma-informed practices in the criminal justice system.
4. Potential areas for legislative reform include reassessing the current registry system.
5. The value of increased cooperation between lawmakers, advocacy groups, and affected individuals in developing just policies.

Rep. Kinkead's participation represented a significant step in bridging the gap between advocacy groups and policymakers, potentially paving the way for more informed discussions on sexual offense law reform in Pennsylvania. Her use of person-first language was evident, reflecting PARSOL's advocacy for more respectful and humanizing terminology. This shift in language represents a crucial step in changing public perception and fostering a more nuanced understanding of individuals with crimes of a sexual nature and/or forced to register.

**By Randall Hayes**



## Involvement in the Pennsylvania Reentry Council

PARSOL leadership has played a significant role in the Pennsylvania Reentry Council (PARC), contributing to efforts that address the challenges faced by returning citizens, including those with sexual offense convictions. This involvement has been crucial in identifying resources and advocating for effective public policies across various sectors of the Pennsylvania government.

PARSOL staff and board members have taken on volunteer leadership roles within PARC, including heading a special committee focused on reentrants with sex offenses. This dedicated involvement has allowed PARSOL to bring its expertise and perspective to the forefront of re-entry discussions, ensuring that the unique challenges faced by individuals with sexual offense convictions are considered in policy-making and resource allocation.

Through its participation in PARC, PARSOL has contributed to identifying and developing resources in housing, employment, data collection, health, human services, and county-based reentry centers.

PARSOL Advocates has also increased its public policy advocacy among various Pennsylvania agencies, including the Departments of Corrections, Human Services, Health, Aging, Education, and the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency.

## Education and Public Awareness

Both PARSOL's year-long advocacy efforts and the insights shared at the Fall Conference highlighted the critical role of education in shaping public policy. The organization's push for age-appropriate instruction on healthy relationships, consent, and recognizing signs of grooming aligns with a broader strategy to prevent sexual harm through increased awareness and understanding.

## The Road Ahead

As PARSOL reflects on its 2024 advocacy efforts, it remains committed to promoting rational, effective, and just sexual offense laws. The coming year will see a continued push for legislative reforms. The engagement of lawmakers like Rep. Kinkead suggests a growing openness to evidence-based reform in the legislature. This presents an opportunity for PARSOL

to build on its advocacy work, leveraging increased political attention to push for more comprehensive policy changes.

Despite the progress made, PARSOL continues to face significant challenges. The persistent stigma surrounding individuals with sexual offense convictions remains a barrier to reform. However, the organization's success in engaging lawmakers and bringing evidence-based arguments to the forefront of policy discussions indicates a shifting landscape.

PARSOL's advocacy serves as a reminder of the complex interplay between public safety, individual rights, and evidence-based policy-making. As the conversation around sexual offense laws continues to evolve, organizations like PARSOL will play a crucial role in ensuring that reform efforts are grounded in facts, compassion, and a commitment to both prevention and rehabilitation.

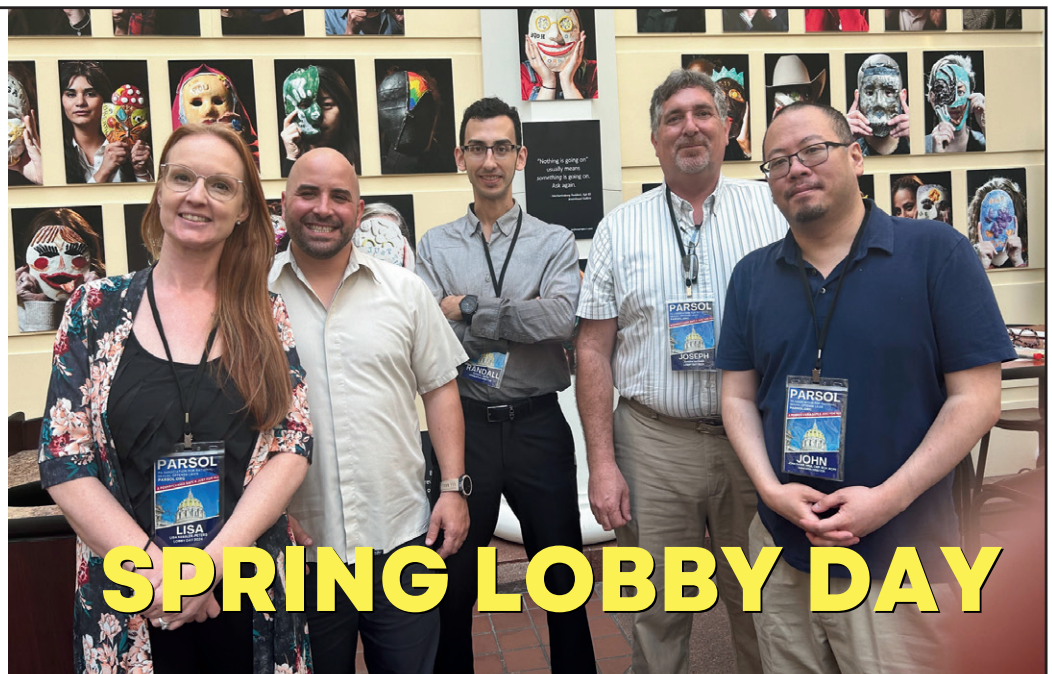
2024 has demonstrated that with dedicated advocacy, evidence-based arguments, and engagement with policymakers, progress toward more rational and practical sexual offense laws is possible.

# 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!



CONTACT US TODAY AT:  
ADVOCATES@PARSOL.ORG  
717-820-2237 EXT. 1





A photograph of a man with glasses and a beard, looking out a window with blinds. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.

# what if a 'sex offender' moved in next door?

**BY VICKY CAMPO**

What would you do if a sex offender moved in next door? Confront them? Warn the neighbors? Move?

Most of us would, at the very least, be wary. After all, that is exactly what the sexual offense registry was designed to do. It breeds panic and fear so that those on the registry are marginalized and shunned by their communities.

But to what end? Are we any safer because of these registries? Thirty years of research shows we are not. There isn't a single study showing any benefit to public safety as a result of the registry. And, in fact, the outcome has been much worse. Instead of being harmed by strangers, children as young as 8 years old are being charged with sexual offenses and placed on the sexual offense registry.

To prevent sexual harm, we have cast a net so wide that people, especially young people, are caught up in ways that were never intended, and their lives and families are destroyed as a result.



Meet John. In 1986, when John was 18, he had a sexual relationship with a 16-year-old girl. He was convicted in 1987 on a non-dangerous, non-repetitive, class 5 & class 6 felony offense for sexual abuse and sexual conduct with a minor. John served only a year in prison, yet he remains on the sexual offense registry to this day, more than 30 years after his conviction.

"I have been turned down for jobs with big name businesses due to being a registered sex offender. I have been turned down by rental agents at apartment complexes.... I have had people follow me who received flyers in their mail box ... and tell me to move or they would shoot me, which has put my life and the life of my family in a great amount of danger, especially due to the fact that I have had to live at home with my mother for most of the 30 plus years that I have been a registered S.O." said John.

It is unlikely that John will ever have a meaningful job or raise a family. Being on the registry will forever affect his ability to live a productive and fulfilling life.

Colin has a similar story. As an 18-year-old senior in high school, Colin had a sexual encounter with an underage girl whom he met online. She invited him over for a rendezvous at her house and sent him videos and naked pictures of herself as enticement. The teenagers kissed, hugged and got naked together when the girl's father discovered them.

After hearing the story from the police officer, Colin's parents were somewhat surprised at the fuss, "considering the two kids mutually consented, no sex occurred, and that they both seemed to have a role in this encounter. Frankly, we first thought this was a matter that could have been resolved with two sets of parents talking to each other. ... We had no idea how much trouble our son was in. We were just about to be sucked into a vortex."

Colin lost his job, his friends, his church community, and nearly lost his scholarship because of the stigma associated with sexual offenses. He suffered deep depression and anxiety. He was sentenced to 20 years on probation under the extremely oppressive sexual offense terms.

**How did we get here?** The laws that regulate people who have committed sexual offenses came about after three high-profile cases involving children who were tragically kidnapped, raped and murdered. Because of these heinous origins, people assume that all those on the registry have committed similar crimes and are sexually violent predators. This is not true. Because of the wide net cast by our sexual offense laws, many are caught up who pose no danger.

Studies show that your child is more likely to be placed on the sexual offense registry than to be harmed by someone on it. The graph below shows the highest rate of offenders committing sexual assault are 14-year-olds. One third of all sex crimes against a minor are committed by another minor, and 23% of those prosecuted for a contact sexual offense are juveniles themselves. Most of these children are simply

participating in age-appropriate, consensual sexual exploration.

One justification for these laws is the belief that those who commit sexual harm cannot be rehabilitated. But study after study confirms the opposite is true. The recidivism rate for those who have committed sexual offenses is in the single digits, lower than for any other class of crime except murder.

In his paper, "Frightening and High": The Supreme Court's Crucial Mistake about Sex Crime Statistics, Professor Ira Ellman demonstrates how these recidivism claims are unfounded, based solely on pop-culture references and political speeches.

We now have more than 30 years of evidence showing that only 3.5% of those convicted of sexual offenses are reconvicted of another sexual offense within three years. That's compared to a 40%-70% rate for other crimes, making those who have committed sexual offenses the least likely to commit another sexual offense.

Patty Wetterling, whose son Jacob was kidnapped and brutally murdered, and who fought for a national registry, has now acknowledged that such registries do not work.

"First, in most states 'sex offender' covers anyone, including juveniles, convicted of any sexual offense, including consensual teenage sex, public urination and other non-violent crimes. Second, Jacob was the exception, not the rule: more than 90 percent of sexual violence is committed by someone the child knows. And third, most shocking to me, sex offenders are less likely to re-offend than commonly thought. A Department of Justice study suggested ex-offenders have a recidivism rate of 3 percent to 5 percent within the first three years after release," said Wetterling.

The hidden danger in basing our public policies on these fear-based myths is that it harms us all. The social isolation of a life on the registry can actually increase recidivism. And, since 90% of victims knew their offender prior to the crime, draconian policies can make victims less likely to report sexual offenses.

As Judith Levine and Erica R. Meiners point out in *The Feminist and the Sex Offender*, "The sex offense legal regime does no good and much harm. It displaces real child protection with a false sense of security at the same time as it incites terror to justify itself.... It exiles a permanent class of sexual pariah—now nearly a million—from the rights of residency, citizenship, and humanity itself."

The stories of John and Colin are just two examples of the over 900,000+ Americans living on the sexual offense registry. All of these men and women have paid their debt to society, yet they are branded for life out of misplaced fear.

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*This editorial originally appeared in the March 2024 issue of Arizona Capitol Times. Courtesy of AZRSOL.org.*



**AVAILABLE NOW**

**The Anti-Registry Activist Manual**  
A Guide to Effective Advocacy



Compiled and Edited by Jonathan Grund

This book constitutes a valuable teaching handbook for any of the millions of people who have adversely impacted by the heavy hand of the American Judicial System regarding sex offense laws and the sex offense registry. It may provide a pathway to those who don't know where to begin. It may light a motivational fire under those who are paralyzed by fear. It may reignite the flame of activism in those who have been disappointed or shunned. And it may offer a gentle reassurance that whispers, "You are not alone."

This is an instruction book that can and should be referenced again and again. It is not a story book, it is not a novel, and it certainly is not a one-time read. If you read this book, then you most likely need the guidance that it presents. If you read this book then you most likely need the Anti-Registry Movement. But please understand, the movement needs you as much as you need it!

**Order a copy today at**  
<https://parsol.org/books>

*The PARSOL/PA Fearless Book Club Read for October 2025.*

**PARSOL**  
PA ASSOCIATION FOR RATIONAL SEXUAL OFFENSE LAWS



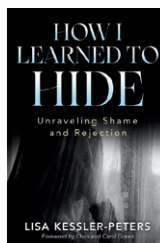
*2025 Book Club Schedule*



**February 18th**

Shizuka Satomi made a deal with the devil: to escape damnation, she must entice seven other violin prodigies to trade their souls for success. She has already delivered six. When Katrina Nguyen, a young transgender runaway, catches Shizuka's ear with her wild talent, Shizuka can almost feel the curse lifting. She's found her final candidate.

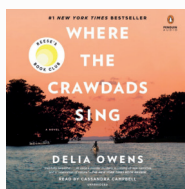
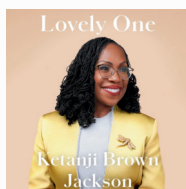
But in a donut shop off a bustling highway in the San Gabriel Valley, Shizuka meets Lan Tran, retired starship captain, interstellar refugee, and mother of four. Shizuka doesn't have time for crushes or coffee dates, what with her very soul on the line, but Lan's kind smile and eyes like stars might just redefine a soul's worth.



**April 15th**  
*discussion with the author*

In this book, PARSOL Board Member Lisa Kessler-Peters pulls from her own experiences and education-breaking down walls of misinformation-and revealing a transparent method of healing from childhood trauma and building healthy relationships.

She explains how layers of shame can lead young victims to addictions, dangerous survival methods as adults, and repetitious behavior through the generations. Her story is raw and straightforward as she shares details about neglect and abuse-and the effects those have on one's mental, physical, and spiritual well-being.



- **Lovely One** by Ketanji Brown Jackson - June 17th
- **Where the Crawdads Sing** by Delia Owens - August 19th
- **The Anti-Registry Activist Manual: A Guide to Effective Advocacy** by Jonathan Grund - October 21st
- **The Best American Short Stories 2024** - December 16th

**All Book Club Sessions are the 3rd Tuesday of the Month at 7 p.m. Eastern Time for 75 minutes.**

717-820-2237



Learn More & RSVP at  
[PARSOL.org/bookclub](https://parsol.org/bookclub)

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# NARSOL

17<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL CONFERENCE

*Together*  
ON THE  
*Grand*

**GRAND RAPIDS, MI**  
**JUNE 26-29, 2025**

SIGN UP AT:  
<https://conference.narsol.org>

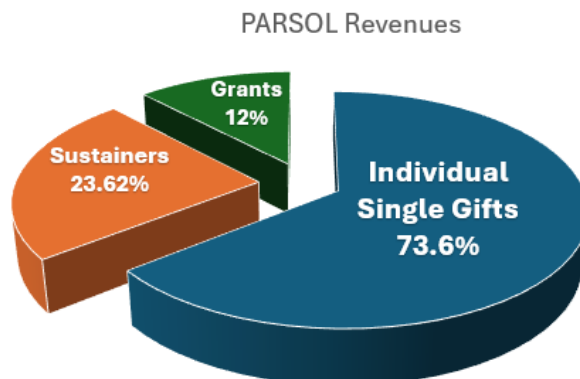


# PARSOL Financials - 2024

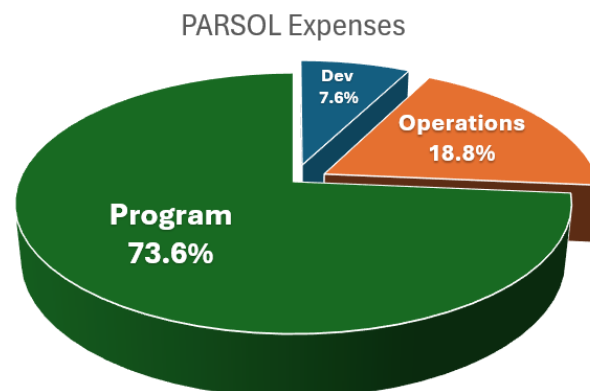
## CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL STATEMENT — PARSOL Year Ending December 31, 2024

REVENUE, GAINS, AND OTHER SUPPORT	
REGULAR	
Individual Single Gifts	\$7,995
Individual Sustaining Gifts	\$2,936
Foundation Grants	\$1,500
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>\$12,431</b>

EXPENSES	
DEVELOPMENT	
Fundraising	\$150
Marketing	\$432
OPERATIONS	
Logistics Support	\$10
Accounting/Finance	\$60
Mail	\$185
Personnel	\$0
Travel	\$409
Technology	\$442
Bank Fees	\$336
PROGRAM	
Support Groups	\$150
Info/Education	\$68
Conference	\$3,592
Outreach & Meetings	\$1,168
Publications	\$258
Resource Website	\$10
Advocacy Programs	\$400
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$7,671</b>



Note: PARSOL received a one-time \$1,500 grant from Vivante Espero in support of the Inaugural PARSOL Conference.



Note: PARSOL's 2024 Advocacy Expenditure was 5.21% of the total expense budget and noted as nonsignificant under the IRS 501(h). Pennsylvania RSOL has elected the 501(h) measurement option.

## PARSOL CURRENT HOLDINGS

### BALANCE SHEET

#### CHECKING

Truist Bank	\$9,753
Paypal	\$237
Petty Cash	\$250

**Total Liquidity** **\$10,240**



**Pennsylvania's Fearless** is a 12-step/12-tradition inspired support group for anyone who is affected by the PA Megan's Law Registry (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.

**Pennsylvania Fearless** meets most second Saturdays of the month at 4 p.m. ET for 75-90 minutes via Zoom. There are occasional in-person gatherings that may supersede the scheduled monthly Zoom time.

<https://PARSOL.org/fearless>

(717) 820-2237



**#StuckIn 1995**

It's time to rewrite Pennsylvania's Broken Sex Offense Policy (so it actually works!)

**@PARSOLOfficial | PARSOL.org**



ACSOL, NARSOL, FAC, WAR, UV4SOR, AND RAA

# DC Vigil



March 2 - Conference at Holiday Inn Reagan Nat'l Airport

March 3 - Vigil at Supreme Court of the United States

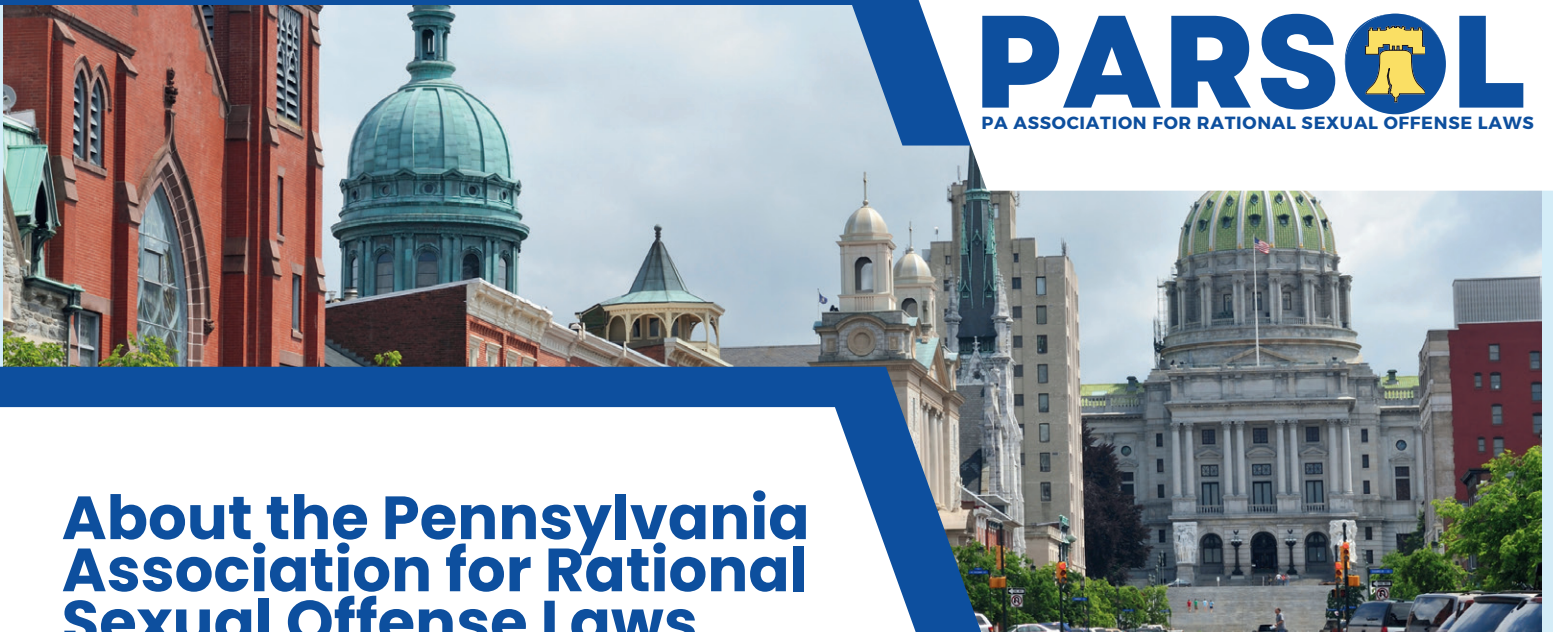
<https://parsol.org/dcvigil>

*Email [contact@parsol.org](mailto:contact@parsol.org) if you plan on joining us!*









## About the Pennsylvania Association for Rational Sexual Offense Laws

### WHO WE ARE

We are a 501(c)3 volunteer organization committed to educating the public and policy makers about the inadequacy of Pennsylvania's Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA).

### WHAT WE DO

We advocate for policies supported by empirical research and endorsed by experts in criminal justice reform and mental health treatment. To help keep people safe from harm, we must shift our focus away from ever-harsher punishments of former offenders and towards a proactive approach that prevents sexual abuse and promotes restoration. PARSOL aims to promote the best possible public safety and individual liberty policy decisions

### WHAT WE BELIEVE

We believe all sexual abuse is unacceptable and 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. As such, PARSOL advocates for sexual offense public safety measures and resources that work for all through prevention-based, trauma/treatment-informed, and healing-focused legislative and public policy initiatives that respect our Constitution and all people's dignity.

Once an individual has completed their sentence, their debt to society should be considered paid, and no law, whether punitive or regulatory, should prolong or add to that sentence.

### OUR POSITIONS

- **Public registries are ineffective in preventing harm** - Public registries are defended as critical tools to protect children from strangers who pose a high risk to them. Yet, the United States Department of Justice reports that 93% of sexual offenses against children are committed by members of their own family or close acquaintances and by first-time offenders who would not have been on such a registry.
- **Sexual harm is a preventable public health issue** - The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention states that sexual violence is "a serious public health problem in the United States that profoundly impacts lifelong health, opportunity, and well-being."
- **End carve outs based on crime class, including registry requirements** - With the lowest reoffense rate of any other crime classification, exclusions of persons with crimes of a sexual nature in public policy and/or legislative action is unfair and unjust. Legislators must advocate against/amend legislation containing carve outs that exclude persons with crimes of a sexual nature from programs that enhance their ability to succeed.
- **Counter dehumanizing registries with person-first language** - We have adopted a person-first language approach, meaning we use the term "Persons forced to register" or "PFR" to describe an individual listed on the Pennsylvania Megan's Law registry. Similarly, we use terms like "person with a history of crimes of a sexual nature" or "person who is incarcerated for a sex-related offense."



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