Meagans Law Essay, Research Paper

Almost every state now has some sort of “Megan’s Law or mandatory notification of communities when a sex-offender is released from prison. Some states are even imposing lifetime probation for all child-molesters, with constant monitoring of even day-to-day activities. Under the law, an offender is required to register with the State’s Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) within 10 calendar days of being released from prison. The offender is required to verify a home address annually for a period of at least ten years. An offender who is determined to be a high-risk offender must also personally verify a home address with the local police every 90 days. First off, let me just say that I don’t have an ounce of sympathy or compassion for sexual offenders, especially for those whose victims are children. As far as I’m concerned they’re the lowest forms for of social predator and, quite frankly, it makes me sick just knowing the people of that sort exist. However, having said all that, let me explain why I think the proposed “sexual offenders Registration” program is a bad idea.

My problem with the whole idea of community notification is we are only notifying the public about sex offenders. What about other convicted felons, why don’t we hear about them? For example, why not let a community know when a convicted murderer has been released? And how about white-collar criminals, don t we want to know when they are in the community? Consumers have the right to know the local bank’s new vice-president was once convicted of fraud. And parents should be notified when the new bus driver has been convicted of wreck-less driving. The list could go on and on.

There is absolutely no reason why sexual offenders should be treated any differently from other convicted felons. The only reason this issue even exists is because of the emotional charge politicians can bank on when talking about “keeping our kids safe” and “keeping tabs on child molesters”. Of course no one wants to see a child hurt, buy why concentrate solely on sexual offenders? Murderers can, and are, released from prison every day, but they don t’ have to “register” with local authorities. Those who need to know about their criminal record have access to it, without having to go through any “extra steps”. This is also true of drunk drivers, and a whole slew of violent offenses (e.g. manslaughter, negligent homicide, and assault). It makes no sense to me why certain criminals need to “register” upon release, and other doesn’t (especially those who have been convicted of killing someone). What is a convicted “sex offender”? Well, it’s any person that has been convicted of a sex crime. All convicted child molesters are sex offenders, but not all sex offenders are child molesters. It’s also quite peculiar that the law is worded the way it is. It’s not “child molester”, but “sex offender”. If a “sex offender” is anyone who has been convicted of a sex crime, we have to look at some of the sex crimes.

In NJ, it is illegal to engage in sodomy. Most people think that sodomy is just anal sex, but it is more. Sodomy is anything that is not vaginal intercourse. This means that oral sex is sodomy, and it is a crime in NJ. It’s a law that is seldomly used any more, but is still on the books, because no one in Trenton ever thought getting rid of it was worth their time, so basically, giving or receive a blow job in NJ and you are a “sex offender”.

One of the basic tenets of our society is (or should be) that once a person has paid their “debt to society”, it shall no longer be counted against him. If someone has spent ten years in prison for a crime, does he need to continue being “punished” even after his release? For how long? The rest of his life? No, jail sentences are there for a reason, or else very person convicted of a crime would be sentenced would be sentence to life imprisonment. Now obviously a person convicted of child molestation and released shouldn’t be given a job at day care but there are already supposed to be systems in place to check for that kind of thing (CORI checks and federal databases). Why must he be singled out for “extra punishment” in the form of registration with the community (and all that entails, such as death threats, harassment, lack of employment, etc)? On a constitutional note, every citizen of this country is endowed with certain inalienable rights. Among these is the right to freedom. By common consensus and by law an individual’s right to freedom can be suspended upon conviction of a crime, but only for the duration of the prison sentence. Even while serving this sentence, all other rights remain intact (i.e., inmates cannot be experimented on, tortured, denied access to religious services, etc). Upon completion of a prison sentence, the individual’s right to freedom is returned, and that should be the end of it. If this makes you uncomfortable, and it should, then perhaps prison terms should be longer, and more of a “law” than a “suggestion”.

So what this boils down to is if a man is so dangerous that he needs to be “registered” with the local police and community, he shouldn’t have been released in the first place. If a man is not dangerous, then there’s no reason for registration.