|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **cid:image001.jpg@01D354B5.C6FE88A0**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contact:** Megan Taylor |
| November 3, 2017 | 202-224-6244 |

 |

**Heller-Backed Bill to Protect Children from Online Predators Signed Into Law**

**Washington, D.C.** –The President signed into law the PROTECT Our Children Act, a bipartisan bill cosponsored by U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) and introduced by U.S. Senators John Cornyn (R-TX) and Richard Blumenthal (D-CT).

This legislation will reauthorize the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program, a national network of 61 coordinated task forces representing 3,500 federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies that combat online child exploitation across the country.

“I applaud the President for signing our bill to help protect children from predators,” **said Sen. Heller.** “This bipartisan legislation will empower local law enforcement – like police departments across Nevada – with the tools they need to more effectively pursue criminals who abuse and exploit children. I thank Senators Cornyn and Blumenthal for their leadership on this proposal, and I’m honored to have been part of the team to push it over the finish line.”

“Equipping law enforcement with the tools they need is vital to protecting our most vulnerable online,” **Sen. Cornyn said.** “I’m grateful to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and to the President for supporting victims and the law enforcement agencies that combat and prevent these crimes.”

“The PROTECT Act reauthorizes critical task force programs – empowering state and local law enforcement to combat child abuse, protect survivors, and prosecute perpetrators who prey on the vulnerable. This significant bipartisan bill is a solid step forward in the fight against predators and the horrific crime of child exploitation – and a warning against any criminal who would exploit our children online. I am proud to see this critical measure become law,” **said Sen. Blumenthal.**

“As a former prosecutor, I know the importance of the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program for our law enforcement officials,” **Sen. Klobuchar said.** “This law will help us continue this critical collaborative effort to protect children from predators on the internet.”

Background:

The PROTECT Our Children Act, originally passed in 2008, authorized the ICAC Task Force Program, a coordinated group of task forces representing 3,500 federal, state, and local law enforcement and prosecutorial agencies engaged in reactive and proactive investigations across the country.  This legislation built upon work Senator Cornyn began as Texas Attorney General, when he created the Texas Internet Bureau to fight internet crimes like child pornography.

The ICAC Task Force Program helps local and state law enforcement respond to technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and internet crimes against children, and offers guidance on victim support, forensic investigative components, training and technical assistance, and prevention and community education.

Organizations who supported the PROTECT Our Children Act include the National Association to Protect Children (PROTECT), the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), the National Children’s Alliance, Rights4Girls, Shared Hope, the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Association of Police Organizations, the Sergeants Benevolent Association, the Major County Sheriffs of America, the Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies, the National Sheriffs Association, the Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, the National District Attorneys Association, the National Criminal Justice Association, and the Major City Chiefs Police Association.

*###*