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| **For Immediate Release:** | **Contacts:**  |
| March 31, 2017 | Megan Taylor (202) 224-6244 (Heller) |

**Heller, Cornyn, Blumenthal Lead Bipartisan Effort to Combat Online Exploitation of Children****Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Dean Heller (R-NV) joined Senators John Cornyn (R-TX), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), and Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) in introducing the PROTECTOur Children Act to reauthorize the Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force Program,  a national network of 61 coordinated task forces that combat child exploitation across the country.   “As a father and grandfather, I am deeply concerned about the dangers of predators who exploit the vulnerabilities of children accessing the web,” **said Sen. Heller**. “The PROTECT Act reauthorizes the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program, ensuring state and local law enforcement have the resources they need to preempt and respond to heinous crimes against children. I’m proud to partner with Senators Cornyn, Blumenthal, and Klobuchar on this critical issue to protect our nation’s most vulnerable.” “As more and more children have access to the internet at a younger age, it is critical that our law enforcement agencies have the support and tools they need to protect our children from predators,” **Sen. Cornyn said**.  “By empowering law enforcement to communicate and coordinate across all levels, we can help make the internet a safer place for our children and guard against future threats.  This bill builds on my work as Texas Attorney General, and I’m proud to partner with this bipartisan group to continue this effort at the national level.” “This bipartisan measure confronts one of the most despicable and dangerous crimes in America –child pornography – by strengthening law enforcement’s ability to protect victims and apprehend perpetrators,” **Sen. Blumenthal said**. “Congress should do all that it can to protect children from child predators, and this bill provides critical new means to fight it. The Internet has opened channels for this horrific crime. It is our duty to close them.” “As a former prosecutor, I’ve seen firsthand how the internet can be used in malicious ways to target children and put them in harm’s way,” **said Sen. Klobuchar.** “Through collaborative efforts like the Internet Crimes Against Children task force program, we can help provide state and local law enforcement with the tools needed to prevent cybercrimes and catch predators. Our bipartisan legislation reauthorizes this critical effort to protect our children and communities.” ***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.  The ICAC aids local and state law enforcement in the creation and implementation of effective responses to technology-facilitated child sexual exploitation and Internet crimes against children.  In order to develop effective response strategies to online child victimization, the ICAC offers guidance on victim support, forensic and investigative components, training and technical assistance, and prevention and community education.  Organizations that support the PROTECT Our Children Act include the National Association to Protect Children (PROTECT), National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network), National Children’s Alliance, Rights4Girls, Shared Hope, Fraternal Order of Police, National Association of Police Organizations, Sergeants Benevolent Association, Major County Sheriffs of America, Association of State Criminal Investigative Agencies, National Sheriffs Association, Federal Law Enforcement Officers Association, National District Attorneys Association, National Criminal Justice Association, and Major City Chiefs Police Association. For a list of ICAC task forces across the United States, click [**here**](https://www.icactaskforce.org/Pages/ContactsTaskForce.aspx).   ###http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_fb.png http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_tw.png http://www.heller.senate.gov/public/vendor/_skins/heller/images/newsletter/icon_yt.png |