

Rep. Allan Egolf
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 15, 2000

House Passes Egolf's Bill on Internet Access

HARRISBURG – The state House has approved and sent to the Senate legislation, sponsored by Rep. Allan Egolf (R-86), designed to protect children who use public libraries and libraries in public schools from obscene material, child pornography and other unsuitable material.

Egolf's legislation would require public schools and public libraries to have an acceptable-use policy for Internet access.

"In 1998, Congress passed, and the President signed, legislation containing the Child On-Line Protection Act, which attempted to prohibit the accessibility to children of materials on the Internet harmful to minors," Egolf said.

A judge granted the American Civil Liberties Union a preliminary injunction to block enforcement of the law. The Department of Justice has appealed the ruling.

"While Congress has tried to make the Internet a safer and more family-friendly place, it has been thwarted by extreme left activists who broadly interpret the First Amendment as securing complete and unfettered access by anyone, regardless of age, to any type of speech, any type of graphic presentations, regardless of how obscene," Egolf said during debate on the bill.

Under Egolf's legislation, public library and public school policies would have to be designed to block any user from accessing obscene material, child pornography and material that is harmful to minors. School district policies would have to block any user from accessing such material from their computers.

Protecting children from pornography on the Internet is the foremost concern of communities, according to a report from the National Issues Forum.

Many public libraries and public schools that have computers with free, unrestricted Internet access for patrons do not provide filtering of pornographic or obscene sites.

"The American Library Association has taken an official position against any type of filtering or restricted access in their member libraries on the basis of so-called free-speech or freedom of expression," Egolf said. "Yes, there is a constitutional right to freedom of speech. But there is no such legal right to make obscenity and pornography available through taxpayer funding."

During floor debate on the measure, Egolf helped fight off many efforts to weaken the measure.

"We can allow no loopholes for porn purveyors to slither through," he said.

Egolf said the state must adopt legislation in order to:

- protect children against exposure in public schools to obscene material, child pornography, and material harmful to minors;
- prevent public libraries from becoming magnets for pedophiles, molesters, and others with an unhealthy interest in pornography by removing an attraction that is drawing these people to a learning environment, i.e. the library, that places them in close proximity to children;
- protect patrons and employees against the hostile environment created by those who would display sexually graphic images on library computer screens.

Egolf said House Bill 2324, which has more than 50 cosponsors, will accomplish these common-sense objectives by requiring public schools and public libraries to have and enforce acceptable-use policies for Internet access.

"Their policies would have to be designed to block any user from accessing obscene material, child pornography, and material harmful to minors," Egolf said.

The measure passed the House by a vote of 177-15 and the bill now goes to the Senate.

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LB/kah



MEMORANDUM

1240 North Mountain Road
Harrisburg PA 17112
(717) 545-0600

TO: Members of the General Assembly
FROM: Michael Geer, President *Michael Geer*
Pennsylvania Family Institute (717) 545-0600
DATE: September 27, 2000
RE: HB 2324

I am writing to encourage you to vote in favor of HB 2324, the Child Internet Protection Act, which I understand is scheduled for consideration by the House on Monday, October 2, 2000. This legislation is vital to help shield children from accessing damaging images on the Internet, and to helping parents fulfill their duty to protect their children as much as possible. HB 2324 would also help create a better work environment for librarians and teachers, who too often are being forced to encounter obscene or offensive images accessed by library patrons.

- (11)
- ✓ **There is a Definite Need.** Polls indicate that Americans have many concerns about the Internet content and its impact on children. 84% of Americans in a Kaiser/Harvard/NPR poll expressed worries about the availability of Internet pornography to children; 73% were concerned about access to bomb-making information. There is ample reason for these concerns: 31% of kids age 10-17 from households with computers say they have seen a pornographic web site. (24% of all children!)
 - ✓ **The Public Wants Protection.** More than three-quarters of Americans say the government should do something about the potential for dangerous strangers to make contact with children (79%), the availability of pornography to children (75%), and information on how to build bombs (75%).
 - ✓ **There is no constitutional requirement** that the government provide access to pornographic images through public schools or libraries. Public schools and libraries certainly don't provide children unfettered access to print or video pornography, nor should they do so with Internet pornography.
 - ✓ **Other States Are Taking Necessary Action.** As of July 1, a Minnesota state law requires public libraries there to block obscenity and child pornography via filters or "other effective means." Considering librarians' already expressed complaints, filtering software is the more likely option.

The Minnesota law was enacted shortly after seven librarians from Minneapolis Central Library filed a discrimination complaint with the EEOC. The librarians claim that prevalent Internet pornography creates a "hostile, offensive, palpably unlawful working environment." With their complaint, they included thick packets of obscene materials collected from library copy machines and tables. Librarians should not have to work in such an environment.

HB 2324 is a common-sense approach to a relatively new, but significant and growing problem. While advocates of completely unfettered access for children of all ages press their unpopular case, thousands more children are being exposed to harmful, psychologically damaging material.

Much time and expense is devoted to protecting our computer hardware from the impact of damaging Internet viruses. Are not the minds and hearts of our children more valuable to us than computer hardware? Let's pass HB 2324!



DEC 5 2000

Hon. Allan Egolf
South Office Building, Room 403
Harrisburg, PA 17120-2020

RE: Child Safety on the Internet

Dear Hon. Egolf,

I have been following the debates concerning kids access to the Internet; have closely followed the COPA Commission, and bills put before the Senate. The problem with kids' access is that there is no solution. The current software in the market either over blocks, under blocks, or just fails miserably. For last 2 years we have been developing the solution.

Our software is not a filter, a VPN, nor any other manner of product that attempts to cope in the way of the current available products. It is unique and has been built from the ground up. We have run a beta with 1800 kids and are currently finishing the product for the 2nd beta in January 2001. Our product is that good that we will guarantee it. We plan to give it to schools and institutions for free with a service fee per annum for home use.

I am 22 years old and have come from a family of teachers so have a fairly unique perspective of the problem. The team is a blend of very highly motivated and skilled individuals from all sectors. Many are currently working for free.

Like all companies in this sector, and especially one still in the start up stage, we have hit a wall with regards to funding. Kids are not a high priority with many people in this sector, but they are with us.

I am writing to you in the hope that you maybe able to suggest some possibilities as to support. There are few people that champion kids causes on the Net and your record speaks for itself. Any suggestions or assistance would be greatly appreciated.

Yours truly,

Paul Dorian
President

Appropriations Committee

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

November 13, 2000

The Honorable Allan Egolf
430 South Office Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

RE: Fiscal Note
HB 2324 PN 3067
Amendment #A4155

Dear Representative Egolf:

House Bill 2324 would establish the Child Internet Protection Act to require public schools and public libraries to implement acceptable-use Internet policies.

The amendment removes language in the bill requiring the Secretary of Education to review and approve school districts' acceptable-use Internet policies and withhold funding to districts that fail to submit policies meeting the requirements contained in the legislation. Public Libraries' policies continue to be subject to the Secretary's review and approval and withholding of funds for failure to comply with the requirements contained in the legislation.

Additionally, the amendment provides that a public library shall not be subject to civil liability for damages to any person as result of the failure of a software program or online server approved by the Secretary of Education.

The adoption of this amendment will have no adverse impact on Commonwealth funds. However, removing the provisions requiring the Secretary of Education to review and approve school districts' policies will reduce the administrative duties of the Department of Education and possibly the cost to administer the legislation.

In order to comply with the rules of the House, you should provide a copy of this fiscal note to the Amendment Clerk for distribution to the members prior to offering your amendment. This committee is not responsible for circulating the note as the decision to offer the amendment or not lies with you as sponsor.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "John E. Barley", written over a horizontal line.

John E. Barley

JEB/RHM