



TODAY, IN 1971

Antiwar protesters began four days of demonstrations in Washington, D.C., aimed at shutting down the nation's capital.

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Fla. molesting law toughened

Some will be tracked for life

By David Roysse
Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. — Spurred by the killing of a 9-year-old girl, Gov. Jeb Bush yesterday signed a law imposing tougher penalties on child molesters and requiring many of those released from prison to wear satellite tracking devices for the rest of their lives.

The measure gives Florida one of nation's toughest child-sex-abuse laws.

The Jessica Lunsford Act was quickly drafted after Jessica's death was discovered in March and was pushed through by lawmakers outraged that the man accused of killing her was a registered sex offender.

It establishes a mandatory sentence of 25 years to life in prison for those convicted of certain sex crimes against children 11 and younger, with lifetime tracking by global positioning satellite after they are freed.

Until the new law goes into effect Sept. 1, molesting a child under 12 is punishable in most cases by up to 30 years in prison.

Bush was joined by Jessica's father, Mark Lunsford, who wore a tie bearing pictures of his daughter and said he had been working so furiously on the legislation that he has not yet really grieved.

"I'm still lost; I haven't really dealt with it yet," Lunsford said. He called the tie his "hug" from Jessica. "I'm still minus my kiss, but that's my hug."

John E. Couey, a convicted sex offender who was living near Jessica, was arrested in Georgia and was charged



Phil Coale/Associated Press

Mark Lunsford, right, father of child-molestation and murder victim Jessica Lunsford, prepared to hug Florida Gov. Jeb Bush, left, yesterday. Also present were Rebekah Lunde, sister of another murder victim, and state Rep. Charlie Dean.

with snatching her from her bedroom and murdering her.

The bill's momentum in the legislature increased last month after another Florida girl, 13-year-old Sarah Lunde, was found dead and another registered sex offender was charged with murdering her.

The 25-year minimum would not apply to anyone convicted of molesting older children. Those offenders would have to be monitored electronically only during their probation, not for life.

However, some offenders already on the street could be ordered back to jail or be placed under GPS monitoring if they violate their probation.

Lots of other states have minimum mandatory sentences for sex crimes against children.

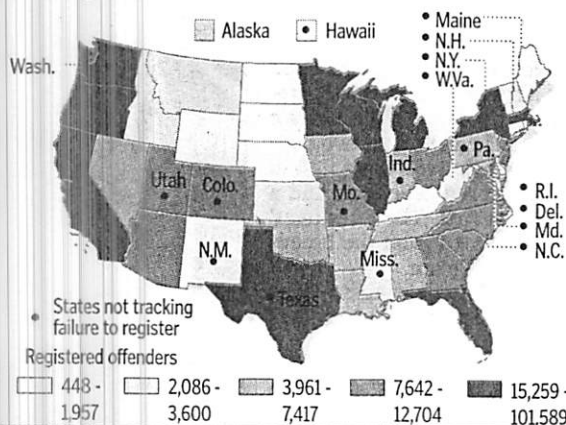
A number of states already require some form of lifetime supervision of sex offenders, including GPS tracking, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

However, Florida's new law may be the first requirement of lifetime GPS monitoring for an entire group of people who commit a certain crime, the conference said.

Florida's new law could also open the door to the

Tracking sex offenders

Florida Gov. Jeb Bush yesterday signed a law requiring child molesters to wear satellite-tracking devices for the rest of their lives, giving the state one of the toughest child-sex laws in the nation.



Regional laws

Kentucky: Sex offenders are monitored through the state probation and parole system, said Kentucky State Police Capt. Brad Bates, who oversees the state's sex offender registry.

About 4,900 sex offenders are on the list. They must have their addresses approved by probation and parole officers and must report any change of address, he said. Registered sex offenders may not live within 1,000 feet of a school or preschool.

About 2,300 are registered for life, meaning they committed the most serious offenses. Another 2,600 are classified as 10-year registrants who committed less

serious offenses and can be removed from the registry after 10 years if they comply with all conditions of release and don't reoffend.

Kentucky doesn't track offenders with electronic devices unless some are on home incarceration. In those cases, probation and parole officers might require them to wear an ankle monitor.

Indiana: Sexual offenses against children under age 12 are punished by sentences of varying lengths depending on several factors. A person convicted of such an offense — if he or she is 18 or older — must register for the state's sex- and violent-offender list for life.

death penalty for more killers, because it allows a defendant's status as a sexual predator to be considered as an aggravating factor during sentencing for a murder.

Sarah Lunde's mother and

sister also were present as the law was signed.

"I'm just glad something's being done," said Sarah's sister, Rebekah Lunde. "Maybe no one else will have to go through this."