



**RALEIGH,
NORTH CAROLINA**

For Immediate Release . . .

Contact: Robin Vanderwall
919.780.4510

Civil rights group challenges media: Stop feeding the hysteria Calls on reporters to stop doing ride-alongs with law enforcement on Halloween

Raleigh, NC . . . Replete with countless stories flowing forth from every region in the nation, the North Carolina affiliate of a national civil rights organization is calling on media professionals to cease so called “ride alongs” with local law enforcement officers on Halloween.

Whether it is called Operation Trick or Treat, Operation Blackout, Operation Boo, or some other name that suggests undercover work and Halloween at the same time, the procedures are essentially the same. On Halloween night, and in some places starting prior to that, bands of law enforcement officers scour the city, targeting the addresses of registered sex offenders to be sure they are in compliance with their restrictions. These include, but are not limited to, no outside lights on, no Halloween decorations in the yard or windows, and no candy waiting at the front door.

For days and even weeks in advance, news outlets praise these efforts to protect children from sexual assault while they are trick-or-treating, and then journalists and others in the media lend credibility to the situation by riding along on Halloween night and filming the efforts. News at ten and then for days thereafter praises the officers and the initiatives taken to keep children safe.

However, according to Brenda Jones, executive director of National RSOL, these initiatives are a waste of time and resources. “This is very clearly a solution searching desperately for a problem. Anyone serious about protecting children on Halloween will pay far more attention to the incidences of injury sustained by children being hit by cars while crossing the street. If you’re looking for statistics to support the hysterical notion that sex offenders are abducting children, you’re going to be very disappointed.”

Experts and research verify this. Exhaustive research reveals [one case](#) of a child being abducted during trick-or treat; in 1973 in Wisconsin Gerald Turner molested and then murdered Lisa French, age 9. Turner was a neighbor of the family; no registry existed then, but if it had, nothing indicates that Turner would have been on it.

In [speaking of the value of special conditions](#) imposed upon registered citizens at Halloween, Emily Horowitz, professor and chairperson at the Department of Sociology and Criminal

Justice at St. Francis College in Brooklyn, New York, says, “All it does is make people really afraid, and it kind of destroys the humanity and the happiness of what should be a fun night... Common sense is needed on Halloween and every other day – but it is far more dangerous to turn the holiday into an excuse to demonize people who have served their time and who are trying to rebuild their lives.”

Robin Vanderwall, president of North Carolina RSOL, had this to say: "There are currently no laws in North Carolina preventing registered sex offenders from participating in Halloween events, nor should there be. Registered citizens are not monsters and public policy would not be served by further alienating these citizens from the social fabric of our culture. When reporters climb into police cruisers to search for 'compliant' sex offenders on Halloween, they merely help perpetuate a myth based on lies, innuendo, and unsubstantiated fear. That's pandering. And it's wrong."

--31--

North Carolina RSOL was organized and incorporated in early 2016 when several registrants and their supporters formed to create a more visible presence throughout the state after being urged on by reports of resurgent legislative efforts to enact tougher laws against North Carolina's 17,000 registered sex offenders and their families.