

**OPPOSITION Response to HB 4655**  
**Establishing an animal abuser registry**

**January 23, 2024**

House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee:

[West Virginians for Rational Sexual Offence Laws \(WVRSOL\)](#) is a West Virginia non-profit association and an affiliate of the [National Association for Rational Sexual Offence Laws \(NARSOL\)](#), which advocates for society's segment that is adversely affected by the sex offender registry. We help families impacted by the registry, seek ways to maintain and improve public safety, recommend prudent use of state funding in this area, and work to ensure that proposed legislation is constitutional.

WVRSOL **opposes** HB 4655 because its primary purpose is, simply put – public shaming. No other conclusion is possible.

**HB 4655 – proposes the creation of a PUBLIC animal abuser registry**

1. The updates proposed to section § 15-17-1 significantly expand the use of public shaming registration in West Virginia. Along with the Sex Offense registry, the animal abuser registry will do nothing other than publicly shame offenders.

**Opposed to: expanded use of public shaming registries**

1. HB 4655 does not improve public safety – animals do not surf the internet, and the people who do have no use for this information other than to target registrants for shaming at best and retribution at worst. No new animal will be protected if this bill is passed.
2. Registries do not work – period, so why are we creating another doomed-to-fail registry?

The vast majority of Americans believe sex offender registries make their communities safer, according to polls. A growing body of research, however, suggests otherwise. A long list of studies using decades of data have found no significant evidence that registries prevent sex crimes. (Bebernes, 2022)

A new study of ours shows that these policies are not effective in deterring crime or protecting citizens. SORN policies demonstrate no effect on recidivism. This finding holds important policy implications given the extensive adoption and net-widening of penalties related to SORN. (Zgoba & Mitchell, 2023)

3. HB 4655 creates and passes a non-funded mandate from state to local law enforcement, where it will get mixed implementation, mixed enforcement, and undoubtedly mixed support.

WVRSOL supports legislation that actually works to reduce abuse and sexual offenses, help children and families, and improve public safety. Unfortunately, HB 4655 does none of these things. Therefore, we **oppose** and respectfully urge the House, its members, and the House Agriculture & Natural Resources Committee to **reject HB 4655**.

Sincerely,

*Philip W. Kaso*

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WVRSOL does not in any way condone sexual activity between adults and children, nor does it condone any sexual activity that would break the laws of any state. We do not advocate lowering the age of consent, and we have no affiliation with any group that does condone such activities.

## Works Cited

- Bebernes, M. (2022, March 24). *Experts say sex offender registries don't work. Can they be fixed?* AOL News. <https://www.aol.com/news/experts-sex-offender-registries-don-215957275.html>
- Zgoba, K. M., & Mitchell, M. M. (2023). The effectiveness of Sex Offender Registration and Notification: A meta-analysis of 25 years of findings. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 19(1), 71–96. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11292-021-09480-z>