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Manager • manager@chatsworthtimes.com
News • news@chatsworthtimes.com
Advertising • graphics@chatsworthtimes.com
Sports • chatsworth_sports@yahoo.com
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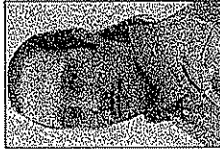
OFFICIAL LEGAL ORGAN OF MURRAY COUNTY

Homeless offenders? New law evicts thousands from their homes

The Georgia sex laws have always been a bit odd. Laws against such acts as prostitution (16-6-8) and consensual sodomy (16-6-2) simply smack of medieval puritanism. While others, such as masturbation for hire (16-6-16), fornication (16-6-18) or "phone sex" (46-5-21), border on absurdity.

Then you have the usual coercive crimes such as rape, child molestation, and the like as well as the misdemeanor coercive crimes where the perpetrator is considered a "sex offender" (appropriately).

Although, laws against sex offenders are much tougher than those against any other crimes, or so it seems, the state of Georgia has decided that it wants to win that competition by going insane with toughness. The new law (42-1-15) that states that registered sex offenders (felony or misdemeanor) cannot work or live within 1,000 feet of any place "where minors congregate" borders on ludicrous. Anyone found in violation of this code must leave their homes or quit their jobs (or both), find a new residence and re-register. Or...until a new family with kids moves next door.



TRANNON GOBLE
Columnist

Aren't they supposed to check the registry before a move? I mean, it only makes sense if you're so worried.

Georgia laws, however, aren't usually based on an appeal to reason it seems. This bastion of right-wing reactionaries is going from "getting tough" to getting downright dangerous.

Would I rather know that a child molestor lives three and a quarter football fields away from me and that the law knows it too, or have 10,000 vagabonds running around the state having to change residences everytime a new family moves in or a neighboring family decides to have children? Thanks, but no thanks. I don't see how putting sex offenders on the run is helping matters any.

Wouldn't it make more sense to promote permanent residences of offenders instead of forcing them to move about homeless and jobless? Couldn't losing a home, job and possibly a "new life" lead to an increase in the recidivism rate which is now very low (3-13%)?

But, alas, using sense has never stopped a politician from pushing a new law. Just label it "tough on..." and folks gobble it up like ice cream... without thinking about the headache to come: more hassle for law enforcement, more danger to communities by creating wandering offenders, and more problems for those who may have paid the price and turned their lives around?

To sum it all up, before some nut goes livid and writes me a nasty e-mail twisting my words, this is as much about protection of children as it is about civil liberties. By keeping permanent residences, it's easier for law enforcement to keep check. Hello?

But, the General Assembly didn't seem to consider that either.

trannongoble@hotmail.com