

August 1, 2007

STENEHJEM OBTAINS INFORMATION FROM MYSPACE Announces New Requirements for Sex Offenders

BISMARCK – Ten North Dakota MySpace users recently received a shock when they tried to log onto their profiles. They no longer existed.

“Last month I subpoenaed MySpace, asking them to provide my office with a list of profiles belonging to registered sex offenders,” said Attorney General Wayne Stenehjem. “Once those profiles were identified, they were removed.” MySpace has been cooperating with Stenehjem to identify profiles belonging to North Dakota registered offenders.

Of the ten North Dakota offenders identified and removed in the July sweep, five were high risk and six were thirty or older. None had been truthful about their ages or their convictions for sex offenses.

“These offenders were hiding behind false profiles so they could establish a relationship with unsuspecting teens, perhaps even targeting their next victims,” said Stenehjem. “I am putting the state’s registered offenders on notice: you are being watched.”

Stenehjem announced that, beginning today, North Dakota sex offenders will be required to register all e-mail addresses currently being used as well as any profiles on social networking pages such as MySpace and Facebook. Under state law, the Attorney General has authority to decide what information will be collected from sex offenders as part of the registration requirement.

Offenders also will have to provide vehicle information to law enforcement agencies and keep law enforcement informed of changes to e-mail addresses, screen names, and other registration information. An offender who does not comply with registration requirements or who fails to provide updated information as required by the Attorney General is guilty of a Class C felony, for which a maximum penalty of five years' imprisonment, a fine of \$5,000 dollars, or both, may be imposed.

Last week Stenehjem sent a letter to local law enforcement agencies and registered offenders explaining the new registration requirements and changes to state laws.

This is not the first time Stenehjem has imposed additional registration requirements on the state’s sex offenders. In 2005 Stenehjem directed that all registered sex offenders have current photographs on file with the BCI. The state’s sex offender website, www.sexoffender.nd.gov, includes photographs of offenders with a lifetime requirement to register and those deemed a high risk to the community. With assistance from the North Dakota Department of Corrections, Parole & Probation, and local law enforcement agencies, the BCI updated photographs of over 1100 sex offenders.

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