

SAFE HOMES STRONG FAMILIES

2010 PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVE

Remarks from Commissioner Joe Masters

October 8, 2010

Thank you, Governor Parnell. I am happy to be here today in support of this public safety initiative.

“Safe homes, Strong families” is not a catchy slogan. It is a reality—the two go hand in hand. Unfortunately it has not been, and is not today, the situation in many homes and families in Alaska.

Armed with a new understanding provided by studies conducted to unveil the true depth of violence and abuse in homes across Alaska, we have a road map. And we plan to follow the map so Alaskans can have Safe Homes, Strong Families.

Prevention is the most important tool because crimes can be stopped before they occur. There are many ongoing prevention programs. You have already heard about “Choose Respect” and “Family Wellness Warriors Initiative”. There are others such as; CDVSA’s and ANDVSA’s “Stand up, Speak up”, “Fourth R”, and “Lead On!” These are only but a few and we want to acknowledge and thank these organizations for the work they all do.

But when prevention does not work, communities must be kept safe and offenders must be held accountable. That means there must be effective ways for victims to report. There must be effective investigations, effective prosecution and effective rehabilitation.

Studies show us that having a VPSO in a village reduces “serious physical injury due to assault” by approximately 40%.

They also showed us that if a sexual assault occurs in a village with a VPSO the likelihood of prosecution is three and a half times higher.

Please forgive me for restating those figures that Governor Parnell already stated, but they are important and worth repeating. We have increased our number of filled VPSO positions from 47 to 80. I am confident that together in our partnership with communities and non-profit corporations we will have 86 VPSOs by the end of 2010.

Governor, thank you for your policy and commitment to place VPSOs in every village that wants one. As a result of your policy 73 villages have VPSOs. That is 26 more villages that have law enforcement than just 2 years ago. And, we are poised to add 6 more to that list in the next few weeks. These VPSOs are providing safe homes in our rural communities.



"A home should be a place of comfort and safety—a place where children can be free from abuse and violence. It is the one place where people should be able to say without a doubt that their family is safe from harm of any kind. A safe home is requisite for strong families."

*-Commissioner
Masters*

We also know that we have people convicted of Sex Offenses that are not in compliance with the Sex Offender and Child Kidnapper Registry.

There are 2,714 offenders that are required to be on the registry. We know that 129 are not compliant. We also know that a number of the offenders that are registered, are also not compliant and do not live at the addresses they have given. A list of out of compliance offenders is posted on the DPS Website

The Alaska State Troopers has formed a strong partnership with the United States Marshals Service, Sex Offender Investigations Branch. Our two agencies, in coordination with local law enforcement agencies, the Department of Law and the Department of Corrections, will be conducting a Compliance Project that will focus on contacting ALL offenders that are required to be registered and verify compliance. If they are not compliant, they will be investigated and charged.

Technology has advanced. We've learned it is a double-edged sword. Technology, with all the improvements it has made to daily lives, has brought yet more ways to bring abuse to families in Alaska: child pornography, solicitation, financial scams—those are just a few examples. Abusers are even using spyware installed on cell phones, PDAs and computers to monitor, spy on and track their victims.

To combat abuse that has occurred via technology we have reorganized our Computer and Financial Crimes Unit to be more effective. We formed the Technical Crimes Unit to focus on computer and internet crimes against children. With this change and added investigators we expect to double our capacity to investigate child exploitation, including cases of possessing, distributing and manufacturing of child pornography, online enticement of minors to perform sexual acts with proactive investigations where investigators pose as kids looking for predatory adults that are in kids' chat rooms using the internet to lure children into abusive situations.

A home should be a place of comfort and safety—a place where children can be free from abuse and violence. It is the one place where people should be able to say without a doubt that their family is safe from harm of any kind. A safe home is requisite for strong families.



For more information on Governor Parnell's "Safe Homes, Strong Families" initiative, visit <http://gov.alaska.gov/parnell/press-room/full-press-release.html?pr=5538>