

Senate Bill 288 will be bad for Kansas

While all of us are concerned about keeping children safe, this legislation fails to do that. It addresses a problem that doesn't exist. The concern is that a stranger on the registry will come into a school or on the property and harm or abduct a random child. Has this ever happened in Kansas? Extensive research cannot locate one case. Cases of school staff abusing children in their care, however, are plentiful. If the alleged facts are accurate, [this tragic story is just this year in a Kansas school](#).

Virtually all sexual abuse of children [is committed by family members, peers, and other trusted adults](#).

This question must be asked: Who is standing up for the children of someone who is on the registry? Senate Bill 288 will devastate their lives.

Little six-year-old Kate wants to attend a birthday party held on school grounds on Saturday, but her registered father, who has been granted sole custody as her mother is deceased, is not allowed to take her. 16-year-old Miles is a homecoming king and wants to have both parents at his "crowning" ceremony, but his registered father is not allowed to attend any "non-essential" school functions. Senior Alex wants his father at his graduation, but his registered father's status is well known, and even if he got permission to attend, Alex fears boos, stares, and remarks from other parents and his classmates.

Parents' involvement in school activities helps make the memories that shape children's lives.

[Studies document](#) the emotional trauma and the stress, anxiety, and depression children of registered parents feel in general, and it is exacerbated when participation in school events is not allowed.

According to [the book *From Rage to Reason* by Emily Horowitz](#), a professor of sociology and criminal justice at St Frances College, "Children with parents on the registry suffer in profound ways."

HB 288 interferes with parents' rights to parent their children, thus making the state and the school districts vulnerable to costly legal challenges.

Since last year [New York has been embroiled](#) in an ACLU challenge concerning the state law that prohibits registrants from being on school grounds. [California schools](#) have had to defend against several suits where parents were denied involvement with their children's education and school activities. If HB 288 passes, it will be just a matter of time before Kansas finds itself defending against such costly suits.

People with spouses on the registry in places where they are restricted from presence on school grounds report excessive loneliness, pressure, depression, and anxiety at having to attend to all drop-offs and pick-ups; school meetings and assemblies; and attendance at sports, band, and other extra-curricular activities alone. Having more than one child, especially when they are at different schools, creates impossible situations. These emotional responses are [recognized as mental health problems](#). HB 288 will do nothing but exacerbate these problems in wives and husbands with spouses on the registry.

HB 288 will cause irreparable harm to children of parents required to register as sex offenders as well as to the spouses of the registrants. It will do nothing to protect school children from sexual harm. It runs the risk of involving the state of Kansas in costly litigation that could play out for years.

This bill should not be advanced in the Kansas legislature.

