



U. S. Department of Justice

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UNITED STATES ATTORNEY LAWRENCE KEEFE MAINTAINS PRIORITY ON SEEKING JUSTICE AND RECOVERY FOR VICTIMS OF CHILD EXPLOITATION

TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA – United States Attorney Lawrence Keefe of the Northern District of Florida today announced that a total of 39 defendants were indicted in 2020 on federal charges involving the exploitation of children, ranging from production, distribution, and possession of child pornography to sex trafficking of minors. Highlighting the impact of his office's work to bring child sex offenders to justice, U.S. Attorney Keefe emphasized his continued commitment to protecting children and guarding our communities.

“Child exploitation cases are not always widely publicized in order to protect the victims and their families, but I have made it one of our highest priorities as we seek to uphold the first duty of government to protect our citizens,” U.S. Attorney Keefe said. “Even COVID-19 has not deterred our efforts to go after sex offenders targeting our children, and we continue to work tirelessly with our law enforcement partners to protect vulnerable youth and help them access the resources they need for what is often a long and challenging road to recovery.”

Keefe lauded the dedication of prosecutors and investigators from federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies who work tirelessly to secure justice against those who sexually victimize children. He pledged to continue ensuring that federal resources are made available to assist law enforcement partners as they conduct complex investigations to dismantle the networks used by child sex offenders and to pursue, prosecute, and punish those involved.

Keefe credited the success of these 39 indictments in 2020 to the joint efforts of the agencies participating in the North Florida Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force, including U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement's Homeland Security Investigations, Federal Bureau of Investigation, United States Marshals Service, Naval Criminal Investigative Service, Air Force Office of Special Investigations, Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Leon County Sheriff's Office, Wakulla County Sheriff's Office, Volusia County Sheriff's Office, Levy County Sheriff's

Office, Alachua County Sheriff's Office, Escambia County Sheriff's Office, Santa Rosa County Sheriff's Office, Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office, Bay County Sheriff's Office, Walton County Sheriff's Office, Tallahassee Police Department, Gainesville Police Department, Panama City Police Department, and Pensacola Police Department.

In addition to successfully investigating and indicting 39 new cases in 2020, other ongoing cases concluded with defendants receiving significant federal prison sentences. Among the most significant, a Bay County resident was sentenced to 100 years in federal prison for the production and possession of child pornography; a Leon County resident was sentenced to 50 years in federal prison for the production and possession of child pornography; and a Tallahassee resident was sentenced to 25 years in federal prison for sex trafficking of a minor and enticement to engage in prostitution.

While seeking the most significant and appropriate sentences for the perpetrators of these insidious crimes, prosecutors work closely with Victim Assistance Specialists, also from the U.S. Attorney's Office, to ensure that victims of child sex offenses and their family members are treated with sensitivity and care throughout the legal process. The U.S. Attorney's Office is equally dedicated to helping victims on their path to recovery, connecting them with state and local agencies that provide support and resources as appropriate.

"The evil done by sex offenders against innocent children truly shocks the sensibilities of decent people everywhere," U.S. Attorney Keefe said. "Our focus is both on punishing the offenders and helping victims find their way back to normal life in our communities."

Keefe said the work of the U.S. Attorney's Office continues undeterred by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. After a brief pause to implement appropriate COVID-19 safety precautions earlier this year, the U.S. Attorney's Office has continued grand jury operations and criminal jury trials.

These cases were brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched by the Department of Justice in 2006. Led by U.S. Attorneys Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to better locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.justice.gov/psc.

The United States Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Florida is one of 94 offices that serve as the nation's principal litigators under the direction of the Attorney General. To access public court documents online, please visit the [U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida](http://www.usdoj.gov/ndf/) website. For more information about the U.S. Attorney's Office, Northern District of Florida, visit <http://www.justice.gov/usao/fln/index.html>.

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