

FIRST GLANCE

Cole County PA to seek central statewide sex offender list

By **MATT SCHMITZ**
News Tribune

Cole County Prosecutor Bill Tackett plans to push for a state law that would create a comprehensive online posting of convicted sex offenders in Missouri.

He also wants to increase the punishment for sex offenders who fail to register within 10 days of their release from a misdemeanor to a class D felony. It would apply when the offense involves a severe sexual assault or a child younger than 14.

He plans to meet with legislators this week about drafting the legislation.

Missouri is one of only 17 states practicing passive notification, he said, adding that 39 states post statewide lists online.

"It's not a matter of if the law is going to be tightened at some point," he said. "It's a matter of how much it's going to be tightened."

The legislation would require the publication of the names, addresses and crimes of all individuals convicted of sex offenses on the official state of Missouri Web site.

Each of Missouri's 114 counties already are required to make their lists available to the public upon request. Some, like Cole County, voluntarily have placed theirs on local Web sites.

But Tackett said there should be a convenient way to find out what types of offenders are residing in which communities across the state.

Last spring, following a meeting with local school officials, Tackett plotted on a map the area offenders list, finding clusters in areas within two blocks of schools, daycare centers and other places frequented by youngsters.

While school security is adequate during regular hours, he said, other times when the schools are in use may be more vulnerable.