



August 30, 2006
For Immediate Release
Contact: Davin Fischer
414-975-6287

Bucher: Crime Lab Delay in Oshkosh Child Pornography Case Inexcusable

Child sex crime cases must be given priority

Attorney General Candidate Paul Bucher, joined by Winnebago County District Attorney candidate Christian Gossett, said Wednesday that the state crime lab's more than year-long delay in processing computer evidence in an Oshkosh child pornography case is inexcusable.

Bucher said that the Oshkosh case underscores the need to fix the crime lab backlog, and for the Department Of Justice to partner with more local police agencies to train them in computer forensics.

"The state's top cop needs to treat evidence of sex crimes against children as a priority," Bucher said. "In the Oshkosh case, that didn't occur, and a convicted sex offender stayed on the streets more than a year longer than he needed to. Crime lab delays of this nature undermine the other work the state has made to crack down on the exploding area of computer sex crimes, especially involving children."

Instead, Attorney General Peg Lautenschlager requested more positions for consumer protection in her last budget than the crime lab.

The newest crime lab delay allowed the convicted child sex offender to remain on the streets for more than a year while the evidence to charge him with new crimes sat in his computer. The man, Randall S. Werdin, was charged Tuesday with 43 felony counts for possession of child pornography in Winnebago County Circuit Court.

The case highlights how the crime lab backlog is affecting more than DNA processing, Bucher said. Delays in computer forensics are also occurring throughout the state, hampering law enforcement investigations into Internet sexual predators and adding additional urgency to the need to fix the backlog, he said. Many local cops are considering giving up on the crime lab for computer forensic analysis altogether.

Bucher said his plan to add 10 new in house crime lab analysts will allow the lab to ensure such evidence doesn't languish. The new analysts would be funded by an increase in the surcharge on criminals. Learn more about Bucher's comprehensive crime lab plan here (<http://www.paulbucher.com/site/Viewer.aspx?iid=5897&mname=Article&rpId=1701>).

In addition, Bucher would restructure the priorities within the crime lab, which currently puts emphasis on cases with a court date. That means that the evidence needed to file charges in other open cases is not handled in a timely manner, leaving suspects on the streets. Bucher said the crime lab should consider community interest and nature of the case when setting its priorities and child sex crimes should obviously be very high on the list.

Police received information about Randall Stuart Werdin, 46, from his now ex wife in May 2005, when she brought his

computer to authorities, according to WBAY TV. But they didn't have the evidence to charge him until this week. That's because the crime lab delayed processing the evidence for more than a year, eventually finding 100 photographs of young girls on Werdin's computer. The Oshkosh Northwestern said Werdin was arrested last Thursday.

Werdin had previously been convicted of exposing himself to three children.

The Green Bay television station quotes an Oshkosh police Sergeant as saying it can sometimes take as long as 2 years to get evidence back from the state crime lab in some burglary cases. To deal with the delays in computer related cases, local police are now considering buying their own equipment to assist in their investigations of computer crimes.

Bucher said the Department of Justice could do more to train local police about searching and seizing computers of sex offenders using the Internet to set up liaisons with underage children. The goal will be to certify more officers from local agencies as Computer Forensic Investigators.

As Attorney General, Bucher would also solicit assistance from the private sector and the business community in assisting with resources necessary to train the officers, as well as work with local technical colleges.

Bucher said that the Attorney General's partnerships with local prosecutors, like Gossett, will be critical in the office's success. In the Winnebago County DA's race, Gossett has also introduced a proactive plan to deal with Internet sex crimes.

"We can't have convicted sex offenders running around the state free while the evidence sits in law enforcement's hands to arrest them on new offenses. That obviously must change and it must change now."

Bucher, the veteran Waukesha County DA, created Waukesha County's first Computer Forensic Unit, a partnership between his office and the Sheriff's Department. The Unit worked with police and prosecutors to investigate and prosecute cases dealing with crimes involving the computer, normally child porn cases and major drug cases. He's had a long-term commitment to pursuing Internet sexual predators.

That's why when WTMJ, Channel 4 in Milwaukee, recently conducted a sting operation of child sex predators in a rented house, they chose to do it in Waukesha County. Investigative reporter John Mercure said he rented the house specifically in Waukesha County, because Bucher has a reputation as a tough prosecutor. The investigation resulted in criminal charges.

The Justice Department reports that one in seven children has been sexually solicited on the Internet and one in three has been exposed to unwanted sexual material. One in 11 has been harassed.