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October 23, 2007

Internet Safety Night Participants:

Welcome to all who are participating in this nation wide Internet Safety Night. I regret that my schedule did not allow me to personally attend such a worthwhile event.

I would like to thank you for your concern and your efforts to better protect our children from a significant threat, cyber predators. Protecting Missouri's children is a goal of the utmost importance to my administration. I have worked with our legislators and various advocacy groups to assist parents, guardians and teachers with the important task of protecting our children. Together we have made great strides toward this goal.

Two years ago, Missouri was among the first in the nation to join the AMBER Alert Web Portal to ensure that information can spread as quickly as possible when a child has been abducted. Last year, we passed one of the toughest sex offender laws in the country. Our version of "Jessica's Law" ensures that sex offenders who prey on young victims will receive a life sentence, with a minimum of thirty years behind bars with lifetime monitoring to follow if they ever get out of prison. Through a joint effort, we have also expanded the sexual offender registry to make it an effective tool for law enforcement officers and parents, earning accolades as the most comprehensive and efficient such system in the country.

2007 has been extremely productive, with many new programs and initiatives designed to protect our children from cyber predators. I recently presented the 2008 Internet Cyber Crime Initiative with a check for an additional \$42,619.50 to support detectives' salaries, training, equipment and computer forensic personnel who focus on preventing and controlling cyber crime. We created this program in 2006 and this year's budget for the Initiative provides a total of \$1.25 million for the cyber grant program, which is over a half-million dollar increase from last year.

In addition, I have secured \$150,000 this year for the "I Know Better" (INOBTR) campaign to help in the fight against online sexual predators. INOBTR is a public awareness campaign and education initiative to help parents and students learn about online threats and become active in the fight to stop Internet predators.

Again, thank you for seeking to protect Missouri's most vulnerable citizens. I wish you the best for an informative and productive Internet Safety Night.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Blunt".

Matt Blunt