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VA AG Candidate Launches Site to Help Protect Kids from Online Predators



Fairfax, Va.

Attorney General candidate Steve Shannon launched a Website Tuesday providing parents with tips to protect their children from sexual predators.

Posted: 6:03 PM Sep 8, 2009

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Attorney General candidate Steve Shannon launched a Website Tuesday providing parents with tips to protect their children from sexual predators, including learning the secret codes that kids use when speaking to those predators on the Internet.

The Website follows his announcement last month of a comprehensive plan to keep Virginia's children safe online.

Shannon helped found Virginia's first AMBER Alert system, which helps police issue instant public alerts to find missing kids in the critical first days after they go missing.

Shannon, a former criminal prosecutor, has made protecting children a top priority. Virginia has only a handful of state police budgeted to work on catching predators who stalk children online. And, there are an estimated 20,000 computers in Virginia being used to traffic in child pornography. Experts say roughly one in three child pornography traders also abuse children.

"I have experience prosecuting child sexual predators and putting them in jail, where they belong," says Shannon. "But our first line of defense are parents who know what to do to protect their kids. ProtectVAKids.com will help parents get the information they need to do that."

The site recommends that parents keep their child's computer in a common area and monitor their social networking pages. It reveals secret codes that kids use to warn child predators that their parents are nearby (such as MOS, or Mom Over Shoulder) or to ask predators if they would like to meet in person (LMIRL, or Let's Meet in Real Life).

The site also informs parents on what to do if they suspect their child is a victim, as well as how to prevent their child from meeting a predator online. Much of the information is drawn from guidance given by the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Cyber Division, which works with local authorities to investigate those who prey on children.

The Office of the Attorney General is responsible for fighting child predators in Virginia.

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