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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG Kaul Warns Citizens of Dangerous Vigilante Activity

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul is urging citizens to stop engaging in and supporting vigilante activities. Law enforcement officers have seen an uptick in citizens attempting to lure suspected online predators with sting operations that they film and post online. These vigilante-led “sting operations” have the potential not only to put all involved parties and innocent bystanders in danger, but they can also jeopardize law enforcement investigations and eventual prosecutions.

“The law enforcement agencies that are part of the Wisconsin Internet Crimes Against Children (ICAC) Task Force have brought numerous online predators to justice,” said Attorney General Josh Kaul. “Law enforcement officers have extensive training on how to safely apprehend suspects and ensure that evidence can lead to a successful prosecution. Anyone with information about suspected online predators should contact law enforcement.”

Vigilantes want to see online predators prosecuted, but oftentimes vigilante operations have the opposite effect. For example, when vigilantes confront potential suspects, it can cause the suspect to move to a different online platform, which can interrupt or even altogether thwart an ongoing law enforcement investigation. Law enforcement professionals also know how to follow proper procedures that will support a successful prosecution; in contrast, vigilantes often do not follow these same procedures, which can jeopardize a successful prosecution. Vigilante operations also could prompt a suspect to lash out, putting everyone in the vicinity in danger.

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If you or someone you know has information on potential child exploitation you can report it to the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children online at <https://report.cybertip.org/> or by calling 1-800-843-5678. Visit the ICAC Task Force page for internet safety tips for parents and caregivers at <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/dci/icac/resources-materials>.