

# The Sunday Enterprise

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CHAZY DOWALIBY  
Editor

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MARILYN HANCOCK  
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SEAN BURKE  
Publisher

## EDITORIAL

# OUR VIEW

## REVEAL THE NAMES OF LEVEL 1 SEX OFFENDERS

Knowledge is power.

This is the guiding principle of all media – and of a good and safe citizenry.

That's why we support Gov. Deval Patrick's efforts to close the public safety loophole and make available the names of those registered as Level 1 sex offenders.

The Sex Offender Registry Board assigns people convicted or adjudicated of a sex offense to one of three classifications based on a review of 24 factors. The information available to the public about each offender, and how it can be obtained, depends on the classification.

The way the law stands now, anyone interested in learning if a Level 2 offender lives, works, or attends school in their community can make a trip to the local police station or contact the state's Sex Offender Registry Board and they will get the names. Minimal information on Level 2 offenders is available on the SORB website.

As for Level 3 offenders, anyone can make the trip to their local police department and request information on offenders in their town or, far easier, go online to the SORB website and see names, photos and convictions of those listed. Access is easy.

But the law does not currently allow public access to the names, photos, crimes or even the number of Level 1 offenders in a given community. Only law enforcement is privy to that information. This needs to change.

While the SORB's seven-member board does its due diligence – as determined by the legislation, it is not a perfect system. No one can accurately predict the actions of any individual, though the U.S. Department of Justice's Bureau of Justice Statistics states "compared to non-sex offenders released from state prisons, released sex offenders were 4 times more likely to be re-arrested for a sex crime."

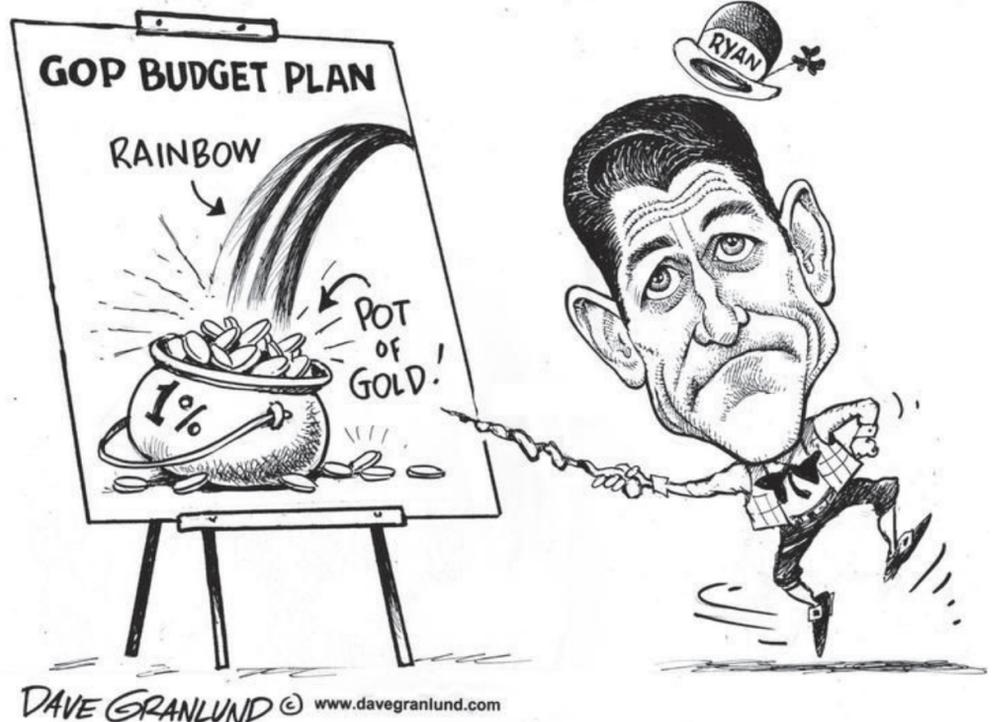
Such was the case with John Burbine of Wakefield who was indicted last year of raping and abusing 13 infants and toddlers in the care of his wife's home daycare. The alleged assaults date back to 2010. He had previously been convicted in 1989 of indecent assault against a child and was designated a Level 1 sex offender. Tragically, the parents of those 13 babies had no way of knowing this.

And put away the notion that someone who urinates in public could be labeled a Level 1. Not so, says SORB spokesman Charles McDonald. Indecent exposure is not a registerable offense.

And this is the gaping hole in the current legislation. Determining an offender's level – 1, 2 or 3 – is *not* based on the severity of the crime for which the individual is convicted, though that's taken into consideration. It's based on the criminal's likelihood to re-offend. What that means is someone like Burbine, who was convicted of assaulting a child, could be labeled only a Level 1 sex offender and the public will never know of his crimes.

It's important to remember that even if the law is changed to identify Level 1 sex offenders, the public would be only incrementally better off. Most sex assaults aren't reported because of the nature of the crime, and when prosecuted, very few result in convictions. There are many more sexual offenders in the world than there are convictions.

But that doesn't mean the public doesn't deserve to have that information. Just ask the parents of those babies.



## KEEP WALKING

# Good transportation can be a prescription for good health

**W**e know that transportation is about access to jobs and housing, about economic competitiveness, about convenience and quality of life, and about our environment.

Transportation is also about our health. Our transportation system – the roadways, bridges, regional transit systems, the MBTA, sidewalks, and bike lanes across the commonwealth – can have a profound impact on our health that we seldom pause to consider.

For instance, while countless Bay Staters have forgotten their New Year's resolution designating this as the Year of the Treadmill, millions of residents are focusing on a tried and true (and entirely free) workout plan: walking to the bus or train, walking to work or the store, or hopping on a bike to get to their destination.

Research shows again and again that people who take public transit walk many times farther each day than those bound only to cars. On average, those who walk to and from the train or bus come close, just during their commute, to achieving the 22 minutes per day of moderate physical activity recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

For people who live close to destinations, walking has shown to be both a great option and an economic boon – but only if the route is well maintained and safe for pedestrians. Research shows that nearly half of us will walk up to a mile to get to church or school and 35 percent of us will walk up to a mile to work. Biking as a mode of transportation has seen a steady increase across the commonwealth – but especially in places that support safe routes for cyclists through bike lanes and other means.

Increased walking and biking has a

**COMMENTARY**  
RENEE M. JOHNSON  
TOBY FISHER

direct impact on health, including lower body mass index and decreased risk of obesity and hypertension. Each of these conditions can lead to a host of negative health outcomes – from type 2 diabetes to heart disease. These conditions are costly to both the patient and to society at large, and reducing their frequency offers Massachusetts the possibility of billions in savings in health care costs, according to a 2012 report from Trust for America's Health and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

There are other economic benefits. Patrons of retail businesses who arrive by foot or bike in a neighborhood shopping area visit most often and spend the most money per month. Increased neighborhood walkability similarly is related to increased home property values. Simply put, neighborhoods with cute, walkable mini-down-town areas are pleasant and desirable places to live. Such neighborhoods have the added benefit of building community – because neighbors see each other out and are more likely to know one another.

But that's not all. For every new trip made by public transit, on foot, or by bike, that means less emissions, better air quality, and better health outcomes for people with respiratory conditions like asthma. It means fewer injuries and deaths from traffic crashes and increased safety for all road users, including motorists.

And perhaps most importantly, a system that provides accessible, convenient and affordable transportation

options enables Brockton residents to get to work on time and provide for their families, to get their children to doctor's appointments, and to make it to the grocery store to buy healthy food for dinner.

But let's be honest. Most riders don't use public transit, break out their sneakers, or pump up those bike tires because they are concerned about their BMI or containing health care costs.

They do it because it strikes the right balance of convenience, timeliness, and affordability that squares with where they need to go and when.

Although the BAT and the MBTA are practical options for commuting within Brockton, to Boston, and elsewhere, much more needs to be done to improve the level of convenience and bring down costs associated with using these transit systems.

Accommodations for cyclists in Brockton are rare. Worse still, the infrastructure for car-free transportation deteriorates more and more with each passing year. This does little to encourage using public transit.

When public transit, walking, and biking options are not available, inconvenient, unsafe, or unaffordable, more of us will opt for the slog through traffic as the best way to get to work or to the store.

If we want to keep public transit, walking and biking attractive to commuters, it is critical that we invest in a 21st century transportation system today. For the health of the commonwealth and of Brockton, the time for action is now.

*Renee M. Johnson is a Brockton resident and assistant professor at Boston University School of Public Health. Toby Fisher is executive director of Massachusetts Public Health Association.*

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

# SHARE YOUR VIEW

HELP SHAPE THOUGHTS AND DEBATE ON IMPORTANT LOCAL ISSUES

### LET US KNOW WHAT YOU THINK

We welcome your letters. Please submit yours, no longer than 300 words, to letters@enterprise-news.com. They can also be mailed to The Enterprise, 1324 Belmont St., Unit 102, Brockton, MA 02301. They may also be edited for clarity and length.

## After theft of guns, a debate on security

**T**hree people, including one wearing an ankle bracelet because he is a registered Level 3 Sex Offender, are charged in connection with a break-in at a Whitman home, where 17 firearms were taken. Readers had much to say at enterpriseneews.com.

“Lets see if the Liberal judges at second district court do anything useful this time.”  
**SCOTT02721**

“Thats why my house is alarmed, I own a doberman, my guns are in a unpenetrable safe with trigger locks..ya I know.some gun owners are going to jump on me for locking up my firearms like Fort Knox..but I dont feel like reading how my firearms killed an innocent person.”  
**RIGIDED57**

“Wow! Whoddathunk that quiet Whitman was such a hot bed for this sort of felonious behavior. This is far more like your basic Quincy crime story.”  
**WILLIAM TELLS ALL**

“Hmm... I wonder if any of the new and improved libdem gun laws apply to these thieves and do the new laws include increased jail time for those who steal firearms from their lawful owners?”  
**NUTSANDHONEY**

“I wonder if the they were going to sell the stolen guns to the police during the next gun buy back day. 'No questions asked', just quick cash for a stolen gun.”  
**RIS**

“This wasnt a random thing, said Benton, noting the suspects knew the homeowner. So why is a responsible gun owner associating with degenerates like this?”  
**RONALDREAGAN**

“Generally speaking, under Massachusetts law any weapon has to be 'secure'. I believe that there is no requirement for them to be 'locked up' (as being 'locked up'in a safe), only that they be 'secure'. Thus, something as simple as a 'trigger lock' will meet the requirements of the law. However, obviously, trigger locks 'of and by themselves' will not prevent theft of the weapons.”  
**DORCHESTERGUY**

“I am sure the only reason this happened is these losers knew his guns were not secured and knew they could get them easily ..if they were secured he never would have been targeted”  
**J320**

“The only question I have is...if I own guns to protect myself, why in hell would I have them locked up?  
**DUH!”**  
**CAPT1**

“‘Responsible’ gun owners who don't secure their weapons should be sent to prison for just as long as the people who steal their weapons are. They should also be required to buy insurance to cover any damage done by weapons that are stolen from them.”  
**THEGOPISCRAZY**

“@GOP - current law requires a trigger lock or an approved storage container. Since the 'safes' can be expensive, many gun owners use the trigger locks. Its common. Personnally, I encourage buying a safe, preferably lag bolted to a foundation wall.”  
**MCGREGOR**