

## The great debate: Are residency bans effective?

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**Edward Sieger | The Express-Times**

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As city Councilman Ken Brown toiled to come up with a sex predator residency ban that worked (he introduced three slightly different versions), he reported that residents asked him to come up with something, anything, "to protect the children."

He decided earlier this month **to indefinitely table the idea** until more research could be done and more input sought. Although Brown acknowledged the thorny issue of preventing sex offenders from moving into a community is a terribly complicated one.

Interestingly, the only comments I received after Brown backed off the issue were from those *relieved* to read Easton decided against a residency ban.

Rod Wagner forwarded a link to the group Oklahoma Citizens for Legislative Change that includes a compilation of **recidivism studies** and **commentary about the negative consequences of sex offender laws**.

**Derek Logue -- who describes himself on his website Once Fallen** as a "former offender" or a registered sex offender -- wrote that any truly concerned elected official would stress prevention and education programs for the public and treatment and reintegration programs for offenders.

He too forwarded a lengthy **fact sheet** about residency restrictions.

Mary Duval from Oklahoma shared her story about her son, **Ricky**, who she feels was wrongly and unfairly lumped in with other sexual offenders. As such, he's subject to residency bans popping up all over the country, Duval wrote.

Locally, Rev. Susan Ruggles, who has counseled victims and offenders, debated the merits of a residency ban in Easton. She, along with victim advocates to whom I spoke, argued bans only serve to drive registered offenders underground. The more bans means fewer places to live, which means offenders are pushed into areas with less law enforcement and medical treatment.

They're also cut off from their bases of support such as family and churches, critics said.

**Human Rights Watch** published an extensive report, **No Easy Answers**, which considers residency bans and registration laws.

"The reality is that sex offenders are a great political target, but that doesn't mean any law under the sun is

appropriate," according to the report's opening paragraph.

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