

Legislator to sponsor outlawing child porn

From staff and wire reports

LANSING — Calling child pornography "one of the most depraved forms of child abuse" which "can scar a child for life," a freshman legislator said Friday he would soon introduce bills making it a felony to finance, produce or wholesale pornography involving children under 17.

Rep. Larry Burkhalter, D-Lapeer, said his proposed legislation would also make it a felony for parents or guardians to encourage or coerce their children to serve as models for pornographic pictures or films.

The bills would make those who

produce and finance child pornography subject to a prison term of from three to 10 years, and provide lesser terms for other offenders.

Sgt. Mike Moyes, of the State Police Community and Youth Services Unit, said the so-called "chicken" films and magazines are available in Michigan, but it is not clear whether any of them are actually produced here.

But he said two recent incidents in which adults allegedly involved youths in sexually explicit activities have raised serious questions about the situation and police officials are now putting their heads together "to try to

find out how far this really goes."

State police seized 18 rolls of film from a Marine City man who was named in the corporation papers of Brother Paul's Childrens Mission, an alleged homosexual pornography ring involving young boys in Port Huron and on North Fox Island off Grand Traverse Bay. Photographs allegedly taken on the island have been reproduced in hardcore pornographic magazines, police said earlier.

Two principals of Brother Paul's, Francis D. Shelden and Dyer Grossman, are still being sought by state and federal authorities on criminal sexual conduct charges.

Flint police also confiscated eight rolls of film from Christopher Busch, 25, of Birmingham, one of three men arrested and charged with criminal sexual conduct involving 10 to 14-year-old boys. Police there say as many as 50 youths could be involved.

At a news conference Friday, Burkhalter said his legislation, "while aimed at one segment of the pornography trade, is not an anti-pornography bill as such.

"Rather, it is a child abuse bill aimed at one of the newer forms of child abuse," said Burkhalter, a 25-year-old father of two.

Burkhalter said this legislation would toughen up a 1931 statute which makes it a misdemeanor to "deprave" the morals of a child.

He also is introducing a bill which would require employees of the state Department of Social Services to report all sex abuse cases involving children to local prosecutors and a resolution directing the department to immediately begin hiring foster care staffers authorized by the legislature.

He said there are 85 unfilled foster care positions in the department.

Burkhalter said he was concerned that youth foster care homes, without proper supervision, "could become a recruiting ground" for child pornography. He added there is no evidence that is happening at this time, however.

Inside the Record-Eagle

Break out the umbrellas. Rain is expected throughout the weekend with temperatures Sunday in the 50s. See page 2 for more weather details.

Snow cover may help divert a drought this year like the one experienced in the Grand Traverse area last summer. Page 3.

Opening bids for a new Grand Traverse government center are right in line with cost estimates. Page 3.

Glen Lake advances to the Class D basketball quarterfinals, while Traverse City moves into the Class A regional finals. Page 9.

Young men's thoughts turn to baseball. Page 13.

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Cartoonist Ollphant pokes fun at those fortunate enough to have talked with Pres. Carter last week. Page 4.