

Washington, D.C., Monday, May 22— U.S. Rep. Spencer Bachus (R-AL) announced today that Alabama is receiving a \$300,000 federal grant to help fight crimes against children over the Internet.

The grant will specifically be used to establish a new Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force of state and local police officers in Alabama. Currently, 20 states have established similar task forces with federal grants from the Department of Justice.

"Child molesters are no longer lurking only in shopping malls or on playgrounds. With more than 28 million children using the Internet, sex offenders are increasingly turning to the Internet to seek out their victims. These crimes present complex technical challenges for law enforcement, and this task force will give them the training and the tools to aggressively respond to these heinous crimes," said Bachus.

Grant funds will be used to ensure that investigators receive specialized training in Internet crimes and are equipped with the most up-to-date technology. The task force is also designed to be a source of prevention by providing information about safe Internet practices to parents and teachers. In addition, the grant funds will help law enforcement develop case management systems that document offenses and the results of investigations into online sexual crimes.

"Although the Internet can be a powerful tool for learning, it's frightening to think that it places our children just a mouse click away from a stranger who may harm them," said Bachus. "This new task force in Alabama will strengthen law enforcement's ability to investigate, prosecute and prevent Internet crimes against our children."

The 20 existing Internet Crimes Against Children task forces in other states have led to the arrest of more than 115 people who were using the Internet to sexually exploit children. The grants have also been used to train more than 1,000 police officers and prosecutors.