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California Senate OKs sex offender bills

The measures are a response to the rapes and murders of San Diego County teens Chelsea King and Amber Dubois.

By Patrick McGreevy, Los Angeles Times

August 25, 2010

Reporting from Sacramento

The state Senate approved a package of bills Tuesday in response to the rapes and murders of San Diego County teenagers Chelsea King and Amber Dubois, including a measure that would keep violent sexual offenders behind bars longer and require closer supervision for those paroled.

Lawmakers dubbed one bill Chelsea's Law in memory of King, who was killed by a previously convicted sex offender after she disappeared while jogging near her home. King's parents actively supported the legislation.

"This tragedy exposed a number of serious flaws in how California deals with violent sex offenders," said Senate Republican leader Dennis Hollingsworth of Murrieta. The measure would provide for life sentences without the possibility of parole for the most dangerous sexual offenders, increase the sentence for forcible sex crimes, increase parole terms for those who target children younger than 14, require electronic monitoring of more parolees and restrict sex offenders' ability to enter parks.

The measure received unanimous Senate support, with Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D- Sacramento) calling it "strong" and "tough."

AB 1844, written by Assemblyman Nathan Fletcher (R- San Diego), was previously approved by the Assembly. It goes back to that house for concurrence in amendments before heading to the governor's desk.

Brent King, Chelsea's father, said from the family's new home in Illinois that he hopes to get the California measure adopted in other states, calling the vote a "bittersweet moment." Kelly King, Chelsea's mother, said she watched the Senate vote on television with tears in her eyes. "I can't think, aside from having my daughter back here, of anything more meaningful to Brent and I," she said.

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger said Tuesday that he plans to sign the bill.

The Senate also approved two bills supported by Moe Dubois, the father of 14-year-old Amber Dubois, the other teenager killed by convicted sex offender John Albert Gardner III. AB 33 aims

at getting local law enforcement agencies to obtain and better use a list of registered sex offenders when a child is reported to have been abducted by a stranger, and seeks to improve training in missing persons cases.

The bill, written by Assemblyman Pedro Nava (D- Santa Barbara), was previously approved by the Assembly but goes back there for a final vote on amendments.

Nava also wrote AB 34, which, as approved by the Senate on Tuesday, also seeks to improve communications on missing persons cases.