stopped on a massive scale. Here's the article as it was published, with footnotes and links to source information on pages 2-4.

How to Fight Child Abuse
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By R.A. Dickey and Grier Weeks

If there is one image from the Penn State scandal that should haunt our American memory, it's not Joe Paterno's fall, Jerry Sandusky's grinning face or the specter of what former assistant football coach Mike McQueary saw.

It's the little boys who came out to the game with them with hair combed and jerseys on, sitting in the stands, filled with excitement, hope and trust. These boys are only the latest to suffer. For centuries, adults who preyed on children hid in the shadows. For every sexual predator witnessed in the act by an outsider such as McQueary, there were thousands who walked among us unsuspected and untouched. (1)

Then the advent of the Internet dramatically changed this. Individuals with a sexual attraction to children began surfacing en masse, as they went online to do what millions of their fellow Americans were doing: accessing sexual content. But the content these individuals accessed — video and photos of children being raped, tortured and sexually displayed (child pornography) — was illegal. (2)

By 2006, congressional hearings revealed hundreds of thousands of these criminals in the U.S. alone. (3) Law enforcement officers at the helm of a national online nerve center told Congress that they identified 300,000 suspects in 2008. Each day, thousands of suspects were being logged and plotted on maps. More alarming, an estimated one in three was a hands-on offender, with local child victims. (4)

Yet, the vast majority were not being investigated at all because of the lack of law enforcement funding. Children who could be rescued were instead ignored. The heroes on the front lines of this battle went home every night with the screams of children in their heads, knowing they simply didn’t have the manpower to go get them. (5)

A frustrated U.S. Rep. Joe Barton, R-Texas, pleaded for more law-enforcement funding. "We’re fighting a forest fire with a can of aerosol spray," Barton said. "If we’re serious about this, let’s put some real muscle (into it) If I’ve got to put out a major forest fire, I don’t send one firefighter. I mobilize the entire operation." (6)

The 2006 Barton hearings led to a bipartisan bill, the Protect Our Children Act of 2008, sponsored by then Democratic Sens. Joe Biden, D-Del., and Barack Obama, D-III., as well as Republicans John McCain, R-Ariz., and Orrin Hatch, R-Utah. (7) Oprah Winfrey endorsed the legislation in a one-hour show, launching more than 500,000 angry viewers at the Senate and helping ensure passage. (8)
The act authorized major increases in spending for combating child sexual exploitation and child rescue. For a few years, progress was dramatic. By 2010, law-enforcement agencies were reporting they had identified and rescued 2,182 children in a single year, though the actual number was likely 10 times higher. (9)

Then Congress stopped functioning, and the Justice Department stopped trying. This year, the Obama administration asked Congress to cut Protect Act spending by 27%. (10) The House and Senate have proposed spending at below 2010 levels. (11)

The crime of child sexual abuse is above all a betrayal of trust. For most victims, it comes at the hands of the very adults who should love and protect them. More than 90% of sexual abuse is committed by a family member or an adult the victim knows. (12)

Even when abuse comes from outside a child’s circle of trust, there is betrayal. A child’s innocent belief that the world is a safe place where adults protect children is shattered.

Holding Penn State officials accountable for what they knew and what they covered up is the role of prosecutors, but the rest of us should be stepping up to a bigger plate because our failure to follow through on past lessons of child abuse is leaving more children vulnerable.

With more than 400,000 American children in foster care (13) and millions more urgently needing protection, we could fill stadiums with children who are counting on us.

They need us to be strong, to look evil in the face, and to step in as protectors.

It would be easy to turn away from these vulnerable children and the atrocities they face. After all, we’re not witnesses ourselves. Yet, like Penn State leaders, we have a duty to act. The people who are forgetting the lessons we learned only a few years ago — who have gathered evidence that could protect untold thousands of children and know what to do — work for us.

There’s no greater feeling, on or off the field, than protecting a child. Please join us in demanding that Congress and the Obama administration properly fund a war against those who prey on our children.

**R.A. Dickey is a New York Mets pitcher and author of Wherever I Wind Up, in which he recounts his own abuse as a child. Grier Weeks is executive director of the National Association to Protect Children.**

**THE EVIDENCE**

(1) There are now over 747,000 "registered" sex offenders in the U.S. This is the tip of a much larger iceberg. An estimated 85-90% had victims who were minors. Click to enlarge

![How Many Child Predators?](image)

(2) Please see "Let’s Fight This Terrible Crime Against Our Children," by PROTECT National Advisory Board Member Andrew Vachss.
(3) Video: Congressional questioning of U.S. Justice Department, FBI, 2006

(4) Video: Short documentary based on House Testimony of Agent Flint Waters, 2007. Warning: Very graphic language and disturbing content

(5) Video: House Testimony of Grier Weeks, PROTECT on Congress' refusal to fund child rescue, 2007

(6) See video, footnote 3

(7) Info on legislation

(8) Oprah Winfrey Show, 9/15/08

(9) Rescue results

(10) President's proposed cuts

(12) The Victimization of Children and Youth: A Comprehensive, National Survey (PDF)

(13) U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Children's Bureau

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