



# Governor Murphy Signs Bipartisan Legislation Criminalizing Sexual Extortion

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*Establishes Using Explicit Sexual Images to Extort Victims as a Third Degree Crime*

**TRENTON** – Governor Phil Murphy today signed bipartisan legislation (S653/A343) to crack down on acts of sexual extortion, which have been on the rise as the digital age creates new avenues for bad actors. Specifically, the new law criminalizes the act of coercing another person to engage in sexual contact or provide explicit images or videos under threat, either of disclosing an explicit sexual image or video of the victim or to the victim's person, property, or reputation.

"In this digital age, the protections we have in place to safeguard our residents must expand to address threats that arise online," said **Governor Murphy**. "As cases of sexual extortion rise across the country, we will work tirelessly to ensure that New Jersey's residents are not exploited or victimized. This legislation will modernize our laws by bolstering protections for victims of sexual extortion and allowing for harsher penalties to hold perpetrators of these crimes accountable."

"I thank Governor Murphy and the New Jersey Legislature for taking steps to strengthen the tools we have to protect those most vulnerable to victimization – especially our children and developmentally disabled New Jerseyans. These groups and others are at risk of being blackmailed into engaging in sexual acts or exposing intimate images to predators, and this legislation allows law enforcement to hold the perpetrators criminally accountable," said **Attorney General Matthew J. Platkin**. "This bill serves as a strong warning to anyone who wants to exploit members of our community through this criminal conduct."

"Disclose" is defined in the bill as to sell, manufacture, give, provide, lend, trade, mail, deliver, transfer, publish, distribute, circulate, disseminate, present, exhibit, advertise, offer, share, or make available via the Internet or by any other means, an explicit image or video of a victim.

Under this legislation, sexual extortion is a crime of the third degree. A third degree crime carries a penalty of three to five years imprisonment, up to a \$15,000 fine, or both. Aggravated sexual extortion, under the bill, includes the act of sexual extortion on a child under 18 or an adult with a developmental disability. A crime of the second degree is generally punishable by a term of imprisonment of five to 10 years, a fine of up to \$150,000, or both.

Primary sponsors of S653/A343 include Senators Steve Oroho and Fred H. Madden Jr., and Assemblymembers Aura Dunn, Angelica Jimenez, and Carol Murphy.

"I appreciate the governor signing this legislation that will protect victims of sexual extortion by holding the perpetrators of these horrendous acts accountable," said **Senator Oroho**. "With the enactment of this law, we will now be able to identify, convict, and punish the criminals who engage in this despicable behavior. This law upholds our commitment as legislators to ensure that justice will be served for the victims of this heinous abuse."

"Victims of sexual extortion deserve to know they are not alone and justice will be served in New Jersey," said **Assemblywoman Dunn**. "This law recognizes that crimes have evolved in the digital age and gives prosecutors the necessary tools to punish predators who exploit, scam and shame our most vulnerable populations. Sexual extortion is a growing threat and addressing it legislatively is a promise to our communities that we as public servants are committed to stopping these horrible crimes."

"The crime of sexual extortion is cruel and inhumane. It is a grievous form of exploitation and harassment, especially with the prevalence of social media," said **Senator Madden**. "This law is a vital step in addressing and combatting this growing epidemic. It provides law enforcement with the tools necessary to properly identify and prosecute this crime."

"Sexual extortion, or sextortion, is a growing form of exploitation that targets our most vulnerable and can have a lasting negative impact on victims," said **Assemblywoman Jimenez**. "We cannot allow these crimes to go under-punished. This law will ensure perpetrators of heinous sextortion crimes are punished appropriately for the negative physical, mental health, economic, and reputational consequences their actions have on their victims."

"Sexual exploitation is a despicable crime. Unfortunately, the FBI notes that it is on the rise across the country. Here in New Jersey, we must take action to safeguard our residents by establishing harsh penalties to deter these crimes and bring perpetrators to justice," said **Assemblywoman Murphy**. "No one deserves to be exploited and victimized in this manner. That is why I am proud to sponsor legislation to protect our communities. This new policy expands the scope of existing law and empowers prosecutors to hold the perpetrators of sextortion crimes accountable for their actions."

## Governor Phil Murphy

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Office of Governor P.O. Box 001  
Trenton, NJ 08625  
609-292-6000