MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

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Senator Loudon Works to Enhance Penalties against Sexual Abusers

Life imprisonment, death penalty possible for worst offenders

JEFFERSON CITY – Sen. John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, today announced he will be filing legislation in the Missouri Senate enhancing penalties against individuals convicted of kidnapping children with the intent of sexual exploitation. Under Loudon's bill, perpetrators of the most heinous cases of sexual abuse could be subject to life in prison or even the death penalty.

"The sick individuals who commit these crimes ruin the lives of entire families and should be punished accordingly," Loudon said. "Recent events in eastern Missouri show the danger all families face from child kidnappers, and we need to send a message that these acts will not be tolerated."

The recovery of kidnap victims Ben Ownby and Shawn Hornbeck elicited a public outcry among Missourians for harsher penalties to prevent child kidnapping. Loudon's bill targets kidnappers who engage in sexual abuse. Under the measure, abducting children to rape or sodomize them could become a capital offense in the most odious circumstances.

"In just a few days, I have heard from many parents expressing their concerns that current penalties against child kidnappers are too lenient," Loudon said. "My legislation makes it clear where the state of Missouri stands on the issue of kidnappers who sexually exploit their victims."

Last year, Missouri implemented harsher penalties on child sexual offenders. Loudon contributed much of the language in the bill approved by lawmakers and the governor. The new laws add child kidnapping to the list of dangerous felony offenses, increase the minimum penalty for child sex offenders to 30 years in prison, and establish a grant program to fund the hiring and training of online detectives to investigate Internet predators, among other provisions.

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