



# MISSOURI SENATE

JEFFERSON CITY

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## Senator Loudon Files Measure Enhancing Penalties for Child Kidnapping

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*Life imprisonment, death penalty possible for worst offenders*

JEFFERSON CITY – Sen. John Loudon, R-Chesterfield, today introduced legislation 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 kidnapping could be subject to life in prison or even the death penalty.

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

Loudon’s legislation creates the crime of aggravated child kidnapping, which is treated in the same manner as first degree murder. Under the new law, pedophiles who kidnap and commit certain sexual acts on children under age 18 would face the death penalty or life imprisonment without parole.

The recovery of kidnap victims Ben Ownby and Shawn Hornbeck in January elicited a public outcry among Missourians for harsher penalties to prevent child kidnapping.

“In recent weeks, I have heard from many parents expressing their concerns that current penalties against child kidnapers are too lenient,” Loudon said. “My legislation makes it clear where the state of Missouri stands on the issue of kidnapers who sexually exploit their victims.”

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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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