



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Senate Leader Reminds Scared Parents of Safe Places Option *Safe Places for Newborns Act Created Safe Harbors for Infants*

JEFFERSON CITY – News of a newborn baby found alive in a trash bin buried under a foot of brush last night in St. Louis spurred Senate Leader Mike Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, to remind scared parents of a state law he sponsored and passed in 2002 that gives them an option to relinquish custody of their newborn child to a safe place without facing prosecution for abandonment.

Gibbons said the legislation was triggered from the case of a baby found in a dumpster in St. Louis nearly a decade ago.

"We wanted to find a way to protect vulnerable newborn babies," he said. "I want a parent who is scared to know they have the best option for everyone of keeping their baby alive without getting in trouble if they take them to a safe place."

Gibbons said this parent's choice to abandon the child put the baby in danger and the parent can be charged with the crime of child abandonment. The Class B felony is punishable with 5 to 15 years in prison. The lesser charge is a Class D felony punishable by up to 4 years.

"By doing the right thing, the baby is safe and the parent won't go to prison," he said.

Gibbons said the Safe Places for Newborns Act shields desperate parents from prosecution who leave their unharmed newborn with hospital employees, firefighters, emergency medical technicians or law enforcement officers. Under the state law, parents can leave babies 30 days old or younger and not face prosecution.

"We've seen it across our country, and although rare, a young parent can panic and leave the newborn for dead," he said. "We want to encourage them to do the safe thing for the baby. Thank God for Mr. Wesley Falker for investigating the sound he heard, ultimately saving the life of this not-even-a-day old baby boy."

In 2005, the spirit of the law worked when a parent had her boyfriend leave her 8-month old son at Truman Medical Center in Kansas City. Although intended for panicked, new parents like the case in St. Louis, the Safe Places option saved baby Aaron.

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