



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Senator Kennedy Announces Senate Approval of Bill to Toughen Carjacking Penalties When Child is Inside Vehicle

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY March 13, 2014

| ISSUE: **CRIME**

*Bill cosponsored by Kennedy to strengthen penalties for carjacking vehicles when a child is inside passes Senate just weeks after Buffalo incident when SUV was stolen with 11-year-old boy in back seat.*

ALBANY, N.Y. – Just weeks after an incident in Buffalo when an SUV was stolen with an 11-year-old boy in the back seat, Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, helped push legislation through the State Senate that will strengthen criminal penalties for carjacking vehicles when a child is inside. This critically needed measure will help prevent fearful situations when children's lives are put in serious danger by reckless thieves, and it will ensure those who seek to harm children receive harsher penalties. Kennedy cosponsored this legislation, which will make it a felony to carjack a vehicle with a child under the age of 16 inside.

"It was a frightening situation when we heard a child had gone missing, still inside a vehicle that had been stolen. Thankfully, our community was able to breathe a collective sigh of relief when the child was returned home safe and unharmed," said Senator Kennedy.

"Children deserve special protections from violent crime, and we should continue to toughen criminal penalties for those who hurt children and put their lives at risk. When children remain inside stolen vehicles after a carjacking, they face serious dangers – including harm the carjacker may cause or the potential for significant injury in a police chase. The state

needs strong laws to prevent violence and to protect New York's most vulnerable, our children."

An 11-year-old boy was inside an SUV that was stolen February 13, 2014 outside a convenience store located at Bailey and Gerald Avenues. After an intense police search, authorities found the vehicle and the little boy unharmed on Roebling Avenue. After sparking a terrifying situation, the suspect abandoned the vehicle and fled the scene, police said. In addition to the threat of physical harm, incidents like this can be extremely traumatic for children and cause psychological or emotional damage.

Under the legislation, stealing a vehicle with a child inside would be increased to a class D felony charge of grand larceny in the third degree. If a carjacker steals a vehicle with a child inside by threatening violence to the child, the vehicle owner or the vehicle owner's family, the suspect could be charged with first-degree grand larceny, which is a class B felony. A class D felony is punishable by up to seven years in prison, while a class B felony carries a maximum prison sentence of 25 years.

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*Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the town of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.*