



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

## Third Annual Jay-J Day Picnic Celebrates Boy Who Inspired Law to Toughen Penalties Against Child Abusers

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY July 12, 2014

| ISSUE: **FAMILIES, CHILDREN**



*After Hearing Jay-J's Story, Senator Kennedy Authored Jay-J's Law and Ushered It Through Legislature.*

BUFFALO, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy joined the Retzer family and Jay-J Bolvin today for the third annual Jay-J Day Picnic. This annual event serves as an opportunity to celebrate Jay-J, a four-year-old boy whose story inspired a new law – Jay-J's Law – to strengthen penalties against child abusers.

“Passing Jay-J’s Law was an important step forward in our collective work to protect children. Jay-J’s story inspired us to take action, and with the help of his family, the Retzer’s, we successfully passed a new law – Jay-J’s Law – to toughen penalties against child abuse,” said Senator Kennedy. “Jay-J’s courageous story of recovery and the tireless fight of the Retzer family have been driving forces behind this movement to strengthen state law to protect children, and we must continue to do all we can to prevent child abuse and secure justice for children who become victims of violence and abuse.”

As an infant, Jay-J suffered extreme abuse at the hands of his own father. The abuse left Jay-J with 11 fractured bones, a severe seizure disorder and developmental delays. His father was given a sentence of just 1 1/3 to four years in prison, and he has since been released from prison due to conditional release regulations and is now on probation.

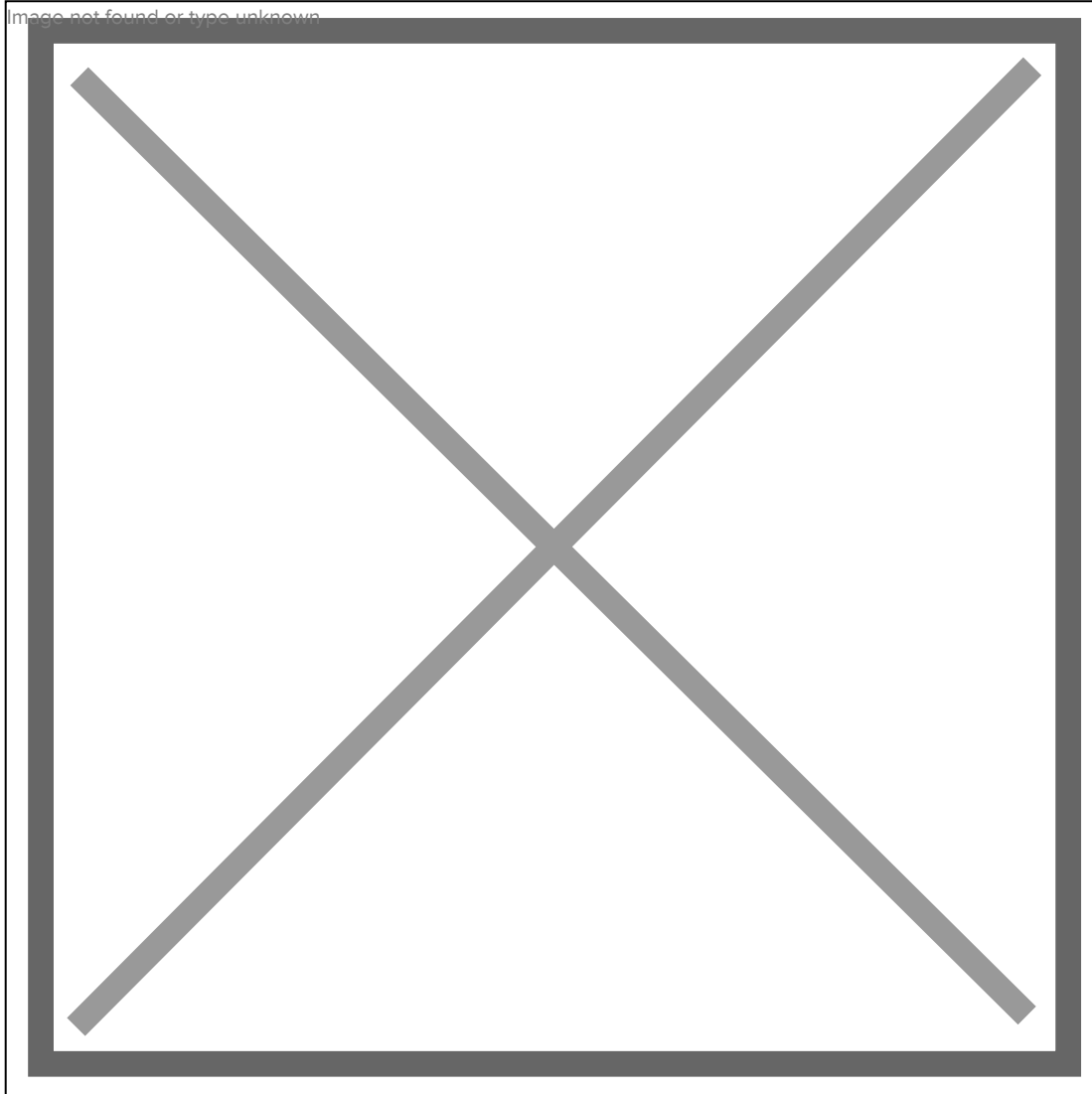
Jay-J’s abuser was also a repeat offender, convicted of a previous offense of abuse against another one of his children. This previous conviction had happened four years before his conviction for the abuse against Jay-J, but the state’s aggravated assault codes only allowed prosecutors to look back at convictions within the previous three years to impose the aggravated charges – which carry harsher penalties.

After hearing Jay-J’s story, Senator Kennedy authored legislation to toughen penalties against child abusers. The legislation – which became known as Jay-J’s Law – expands the look-back period from three to 10 years to ensure those with a history of violence against children are given harsher sentences for their crimes. This legislation also provided an enhanced degree of protection for children who becomes victims of abuse. With the support of the Retzer family, the bill was passed in the Senate and Assembly, and signed into law by the Governor last year.

Senator Kennedy continues to work with the Retzer family – Jay-J’s grandparents Joseph and Tabitha Retzer and his Uncle Kevin and Aunt Chris Retzer – to push for stronger laws to

protect children. Together, they are working to ensure New York State gets tough on those who abuse children, while putting in place strong protections to keep kids safe.

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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>.*