



Wisconsin State Legislature

Mark Meyer

State Senator
32nd Senate District

DuWayne Johnsrud

State Representative
96th Assembly District

*******MEDIA ADVISORY*******

**Press Conference
Senate Parlor**

**Thursday, April 26, 2001
9:30am**

Senator Mark Meyer (D-La Crosse) and Representative DuWayne Johnsrud (R-Eastman) will talk about their bill to help one of their constituents, Lori Long of Prairie du Chien, stop her ex-husband from taking their four children to Iran, his native homeland. The strong possibility exists that he may never return, giving Ms. Long no way to bring them back.

In its decision to allow the ex-husband to travel to Iran with their children, the Wisconsin Court of Appeals said it found no law that prohibits a parent with joint legal custody from taking a child to a foreign country for up to 90 days. The court made this decision even though it acknowledged that the father might not return with the children *and* that the mother would have no legal recourse to bring them back to the United States.

Not only is Iran a country that does not have diplomatic relations with the United States, the Iranian government also does not recognize dual citizenship. If these children are taken to Iran, they would be considered Iranian citizens and the United States would not be regarded as their rightful homeland. Over the years, the U.S. Department of State has been involved in almost 100 cases where children have been wrongfully taken to Iran, and the majority of them have never been resolved. Here in Wisconsin we need to make sure that our children are protected from potential abduction by making sure both parents agree to a trip to a questionable country.

This legislation would prohibit a parent with physical placement rights from leaving the country with their children *only if* the other parent objects *and* if the country is not a party to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Countries that are signatories to this convention have established procedures that would ensure the return of abducted children to their native land and have diplomatic relations with the United States. Countries that have not signed the convention include Iran, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Bosnia. Note that this bill would only prevent a trip to one of these countries if the other parent objected.

Senator Meyer and Representative Johnsrud have introduced companion bills in the Senate (SB-89) and in the Assembly (AB-220). Both bills will be receiving a public hearing on Thursday, April 26th. **Ms. Long, her children and friends will speak at the press conference and will be testifying at the Assembly Family Law Committee in Room 225 NW of the Capitol at 10:00 am Thursday morning along with Senator Meyer and Representative Johnsrud.** The Senate Judiciary Committee will also hear testimony in Eau Claire on SB-89 on Thursday.