

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

December 5, 2012

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AG ANNOUNCES SEX ABUSE CONVICTION IN CULLMAN COUNTY FOR FORMER YOUTH MINISTER ALREADY CONVICTED IN ELMORE COUNTY

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange today announced that a former Wetumpka youth minister, already convicted for sex crimes in Elmore County, has been convicted also in Cullman County. John A. Astorga, 38, of Titus, was previously a youth minister at the Bethel Assembly of God.

Last night, Astorga was found guilty as charged, of first-degree sexual abuse, by a jury in Cullman County Circuit Court, following a trial that began on December 3. The Attorney General's Office presented evidence that included testimony of the victim, who was less than 12 years old at the time of the crime.

Astorga faces a potential penalty in Cullman County of one year and one day to 10 years for the Class C felony. Additionally, this conviction requires him to register as a convicted sex offender and abide by the community notification requirements of state law, as already is required by his previous conviction in Elmore County on April 11, 2012.

Astorga had been free on an appeal bond from the Elmore County conviction, for which he was sentenced to 36 months in jail for two counts of first-degree sexual abuse, to run concurrently. Following his conviction in Cullman County, he now is in custody of the Cullman County Sheriff's Office, pending sentencing in this case. After the completion of a presentence investigation report, a sentencing hearing will be set.

"We will urge the Court to consider the predatory nature of this man's crimes and the devastation caused to his child victims, and to impose a prison sentence," said Attorney General Strange. "We are deeply concerned about the damage that he has done, and want to ensure that he does not have the opportunity to continue to prey upon innocent children."

The cases were prosecuted by the Attorney General's Criminal Trials Division. Attorney General Luther Strange commended those involved, noting in particular Assistant Attorneys General Andrew Arrington and John Hensley, Special Agents of his Investigations Division, and Victim Service Officer Doris Hancock. He also thanked the Cullman County Sheriff's Office, the Cullman County District Attorney's Office, and the Cullman County Child Advocacy Center, for valuable assistance in reaching yesterday's conviction.



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