

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 3, 2013

For More Information, contact:
Joy Patterson (334) 242-7491
Page 1 of 1

AG ANNOUNCES MAXIMUM SENTENCE FOR FORMER YOUTH MINISTER WITH MULTIPLE CONVICTIONS FOR SEX CRIMES AGAINST CHILDREN

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange announced that a former Wetumpka youth minister was sentenced yesterday in Cullman County Circuit Court to the maximum sentence of 10 years imprisonment for first-degree sexual abuse of a child who was less than 12 years old.

John A. Astorga, who was previously a youth minister at the Bethel Assembly of God in Wetumpka, had been free on an appeal bond since his conviction in April of 2012 for two counts of first-degree sexual abuse in Elmore County. Since his conviction in Cullman County in December of 2012, he has been and remains in the custody of the Cullman County Sheriff's Office. Astorga's 10-year sentence in Cullman County will run consecutively – in addition – to his 36-month sentence in Elmore County. Additionally, he will be required to register as a sex offender and to abide by the community notification requirements of state law.

In December of 2012, Astorga was found guilty following a trial in Cullman County, in which the Attorney General's Office presented evidence that included testimony of the victim. The trial in Elmore County included testimony from three separate victims, as well as from the pastor of the church where Astorga had been employed.

"I am pleased that the Court considered the predatory nature of this man's crimes and the devastation caused to his child victims, and thus imposed the maximum available 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.

--30--

