

[home](#) > [press](#) > [press releases](#) > boxer, lautenberg, kerry, Lugar, inhofe join colleagues to introduce resolution condemning international parental child abduction

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Press Releases

Boxer Op-Eds

Boxer Email Updates

Boxer Videos

Boxer Photos

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## Press Release of U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer

For Immediate Release:  
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### Boxer, Lautenberg, Kerry, Lugar, Inhofe Join Colleagues to Introduce Resolution Condemning International Parental Child Abduction

*Bipartisan Resolution Calls on Countries to Do More to Prevent and Resolve Cases of Children Abducted by Parents Across International Borders*

**Washington, D.C.** – U.S. Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA) today joined Senators Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ), John Kerry (D-MA), Richard Lugar (R-IN), James Inhofe (R-OK) and 10 colleagues to introduce a bipartisan resolution condemning the unlawful international abduction of all children. The resolution also calls on the United States and the international community to take additional steps to resolve current and future abduction cases.

Tragically, international parental child abduction continues to be a common occurrence. According to the U.S. Department of State, last year 1,367 American children were reported abducted by a parent from the United States to a foreign country.

The 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction is the principal tool for a

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parent seeking the return of a child abducted across international borders. The Convention provides a legal framework for securing the return of an abducted child so that judicial authorities can make decisions on issues of custody and the best interests of the child. However, many countries do not participate in the Hague Abduction Convention and the Convention does not apply to abductions that occur before a country joins.

The resolution calls on all countries to join and fully comply with the Hague Abduction Convention and to take other steps to prevent and resolve cases of international parental child abduction. The resolution also expresses the Sense of the Senate that the United States should “aggressively pursue the return of each child abducted by a parent from the United States to another country through all appropriate means, consistent with the Hague Abduction Convention, and through extradition, when appropriate, and facilitate access by the left-behind parent if the child is not returned.”

**“These abductions are devastating for the parent who is left behind and are extremely harmful to the children involved,”** Senator Boxer said. **“I have met parents who have not seen or heard from their children in years, and this is simply unacceptable. The international community must be united in its condemnation of child abduction and in its commitment to resolve custody disputes by rule of law.”**

**“International child abduction is a tragic situation that impacts not only the parents who are left behind but also the children who have been illegally separated from them and denied any contact,”** Senator Lugar said. **“Bringing greater attention to this issue is important if we are to change other governments’ attitudes to these abductions.”**

**“Conservatives and liberals rarely agree, but on the issue of these child abductions, we see eye to eye,”** Senator Inhofe said. **“Unfortunately, some countries around the world are complicit in allowing these unacceptable acts. The heart wrenching stories I have heard from parents is not just devastating for them, but destructive for the children. It is time for the Senate to act in a way that will help end this injustice. This well written measure is a high priority. I encourage my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join in this effort.”**

**“International child abductions aren’t faceless crimes, they’re real and they’re tragic,”** Senator Kerry said. **“Over the last two years, I’ve gotten to know Colin Bower, a Massachusetts father who had full legal custody of his two young sons and whose life was ripped apart when they were abducted and taken to Egypt. We’re still fighting and working to get his boys home and reunite them with their dad. If you know Colin, you know it’s almost a cliché to say that this is any parent’s worst nightmare and a tragic, all-too-real reminder of why the United States must condemn international abductions and work to resolve them. The international community must stand up and do all it can to make this right.”**

**“We saw firsthand the devastation that international child abductions cause for parents and children when New Jersey resident David Goldman had to fight for years to be reunited with his son Sean. We need to gain the support of countries around the world in condemning this practice and agreeing to cooperate in the return of abducted children. This resolution will help us prevent these tragedies in the future,”** said Lautenberg, who was instrumental in helping the return of Sean Goldman from Brazil to his father in the United

States.

In November 2009, Senator Boxer and 21 colleagues **wrote** to President Obama urging him to address international parental child abduction with Japanese leaders during a trip to the country. Japan remains the only G-7 industrialized nation that has yet to ratify the Hague Abduction Convention.

The resolution introduced today will help continue to raise the profile of this important issue in the United States and across the globe. Additional cosponsors of the resolution currently include Senators Benjamin Cardin (D-MD), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Jeff Merkley (D-OR), Marco Rubio (R-FL), Mark Kirk (R-IL), Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Patty Murray (D-WA). The full text of the resolution is below.

##

## RESOLUTION

To express the sense of the Senate on international parental child abduction.

Whereas international parental child abduction is a tragic and common occurrence;

Whereas the abduction of a child by one parent is a heartbreaking loss for the left-behind parent and deprives the child of a relationship with 2 loving parents;

Whereas, according to the Report on Compliance with the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction of the United States Department of State from April 2010, research shows that abducted children are at risk of significant short- and long-term problems, including "anxiety, eating problems, nightmares, mood swings, sleep disturbances, [and] aggressive behavior";

Whereas, according to that report, left-behind parents may also experience substantial psychological and emotional issues, including feelings of "betrayal, sadness over the loss of their children or the end of their marriage, anger toward the other parent, anxiety, sleeplessness, and severe depression", as well as financial strain while fighting for the return of a child;

Whereas, since 1988, the United States, which has a treaty relationship under the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, done at The Hague October 25, 1980 (TIAS 11670) (referred to in this preamble as the "Hague Abduction Convention") with 69 other countries, has agreed with its treaty partners to follow the terms of the Hague Abduction Convention;

Whereas the Hague Abduction Convention provides a legal framework for securing the prompt return of wrongfully removed or retained children to the countries of their habitual residence where competent courts can make decisions on issues of custody and the best interests of the children;

Whereas, according to the United States Department of State, the number of new cases of international child abduction from the United States increased from 579 in 2006 to 941 in 2011;

Whereas, in 2011, those 941 cases involved 1,367 children who were reported abducted from the United States by a parent and taken to a foreign country;

Whereas, in 2011, more than 660 children who were abducted from the United States and taken to a foreign country were returned to the United States;

Whereas 7 of the top 10 countries to which children from the United States were most frequently abducted in 2011 are parties to the Hague Abduction Convention, including Mexico, Canada, the United Kingdom, Germany, Ecuador, Brazil, and Colombia;

Whereas Japan, India, and Egypt are not parties to the Hague Abduction Convention and were also among the top 10 countries to which children in the United States were most frequently abducted in 2011;

Whereas, in many countries, such as Japan and India, international parental child abduction is not considered a crime, and custody rulings made by courts in the United States are not typically recognized by courts in those countries; and

Whereas Japan is the only member of the Group of 7 major industrialized countries that has not ratified the Hague Abduction Convention: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That—

(1) the Senate—

(A) condemns the unlawful international abduction of all children;

(B) urges countries identified by the United States Department of State as noncompliant or demonstrating patterns of noncompliance with the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, done at The Hague October 25, 1980 (TIAS 11670) (referred to in this resolution as the “Hague Abduction Convention”) to fulfill their commitment under international law to expeditiously implement the provisions of the Hague Abduction Convention;

(C) calls on all countries to accede to or ratify the Hague Abduction Convention and to promptly institute measures to equitably and transparently address cases of international parental child abduction; and

(D) calls on all countries that have not acceded to or ratified the Hague Abduction Convention to develop a mechanism for the resolution of current and future cases of international parental child abduction that occur before those countries accede to or ratify the Hague Abduction Convention in order to facilitate the prompt return of children abducted to those countries to the children’s countries of habitual residence; and

of children abducted to these countries to the children's countries of habitual residence, and

(2) it is the sense of the Senate that the United States should—

(A) aggressively pursue the return of each child abducted by a parent from the United States to another country through all appropriate means, consistent with the Hague Abduction Convention, and through extradition, when appropriate, and facilitate access by the left-behind parent if the child is not returned;

(B) take all appropriate measures to ensure that a child abducted to a country that is a party to the Hague Abduction Convention is returned to the country of habitual residence of the child in compliance with the provisions of the Hague Abduction Convention;

(C) continue to use diplomacy to encourage other countries to accede to or ratify the Hague Abduction Convention and to take the necessary steps to effectively fulfill their responsibilities under the Hague Abduction Convention;

(D) use diplomacy to encourage countries that have not acceded to or ratified the Hague Abduction Convention to develop an institutionalized mechanism to transparently and expeditiously resolve current and future cases of international child abduction that occur before those countries accede to or ratify the Hague Abduction Convention; and

(E) review the advisory services made available to United States citizens by the United States Department of State, the United States Department of Justice, and other United States Government agencies—

(i) to improve the prevention of international parental child abduction from the United States; and

(ii) to ensure that effective and timely assistance is provided to United States citizens who are parents of children abducted from the United States and taken to foreign countries.

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