

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE LAUDS FINAL PASSAGE OF LOOTING BILL

(MONTGOMERY) – Attorney General Luther Strange called today’s final passage of HB 340 “a fitting tribute to the victims who suffered and struggled through the devastating tornadoes that struck Alabama one year ago.” In the wake of the tragic tornadoes of last year, Attorney General Strange advocated this tough law to specifically criminalize looting and provide strong penalties.

Attorney General Strange commended the outstanding leadership of Representative John Merrill and Senators Gerald Allen and Cam Ward for moving this through the Legislature. The bill passed both houses of the Legislature with no dissenting votes.

“I am pleased that the Legislature has acted to protect Alabamians in these times of severe disaster and crisis,” said Attorney General Strange. “When people are experiencing destruction of property, serious injuries and perhaps even the loss of loved ones, it has been appalling to see criminal activity that takes advantage of a tragedy by looting what may be left of a business’s inventory or the belongings from someone's home. It became all too evident that Alabama needs a stronger law to protect our citizens at just such times when they are suffering and vulnerable. This law will also apply in other times of emergency such as the hurricanes that frequently strike our Gulf Coast. Our senators and representatives have sent a strong and clear message to those who would prey on our people at such times.”

Attorney General Strange developed this legislation based on discussions within the Attorney General's Law Enforcement Advisory Committee and the law officers’ recommendations for better tools to combat looting. Under previous law, Alabama has not had a crime specific to looting, and the existing laws against burglary, theft and trespassing have not been adequate to fight the looting that becomes epidemic during times of disaster.

The Attorney General’s legislation specifically criminalizes looting and makes it a class C felony, which is punishable by one to 10 years imprisonment and a fine of up to \$15,000. "A person commits the crime of looting if the person intentionally enters without authorization any building or real property during a state of emergency and obtains, exerts control over, damages, or removes the property of another person without lawful authority." It also is specified that a person subject to prosecution for looting still may be prosecuted for other applicable offenses. This law would apply when the Governor has proclaimed an official state of emergency.

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