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**PRESS RELEASE: “I didn’t get into politics to talk” — Senator Don Ipson awarded “Legislator of the Year” for his efforts to end Child Torture**

SNOWBIRD, UTAH – This May, leaders and advocates from across the state gathered for the annual Children’s Justice Symposium in northern Utah. The annual event helps law enforcement officers, prosecuting attorneys, and victim advocates stay up to date on best practices for helping children who have been victimized by crime.

During this year’s symposium, the Utah Victim Services Commission presented Washington County’s own Senator Don L. Ipson with the “Legislator of the Year” award. This annual award recognizes an individual from the Utah State Legislature for their advancement of legislative initiatives that seek to protect Utah’s citizens.

Senator Ipson has been a longtime supporter of law enforcement, but his receipt of this specific award was due, in large part, to his sponsorship of Senate Bill 24: Child Abuse and Torture Amendments during the 2025 Utah Legislative Session.

Washington County Attorney Eric Clarke and Washington County Children’s Justice Center (CJC) Director Kristy Pike approached Senator Don Ipson to sponsor this legislation in response to heinous criminal cases, both locally and across the state, that involved the purposeful and systematic torture of children.

The aim of the legislation was to recognize this type of child torture as something that goes beyond child abuse and to define the crime of child torture as a first-degree felony with a mandatory minimum sentence. Utah has never had a statutory definition regarding the systematic torture of children, rather, these crimes have generally been charged as aggravated physical abuse of a child, a second-degree felony.

Washington County and Senator Ipson worked with partners from across the state on the bill, including officials from the Weber County Attorney’s Office, the Utah Attorney General’s Office, CJC Programs across Utah. Despite significant opposition, Senator Ipson used his well-respected experience and influence in the legislature to find balance between all interests. The resulting statute maintained mandatory minimum sentences for perpetrators, but provided for a documented path that judges could use if they felt a lesser mandatory prison sentence was appropriate.

“We thank Senator Ipson for sponsoring this legislation and working tirelessly to ensure its successful passage. We do not anticipate that the child torture code will be used frequently, but when the circumstances of a person’s criminal actions rise to that level it is essential that Utah’s prosecutors have the tools they need.” Clarke stated. “They now have that because of Senator Ipson, our Washington County team, and our partners from across the state.”

“The topic of child torture is heavy, and the process behind the scenes to define torture and draft this bill was arduous,” Pike added. “Senator Ipson never flinched in his championing of children. I am thrilled that as a result, children who have been victims of this heinous crime will have time without hearings and legal proceedings in which they can heal. As a community, it is incumbent upon us to create that safe space for kids, and Senator Ipson’s influence was incalculable in helping that happen.”

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“I didn’t get into politics to talk,” Senator Ipson remarked. “I got in to protect people. No child should ever suffer like that, and now the law finally reflects it. I’m proud we stood up for the kids who couldn’t speak for themselves.”

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