



# Department of Justice

Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown  
Eastern District of California

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## **LASSEN COUNTY MAN INDICTED ON CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES**

SACRAMENTO, Calif.—Acting United States Attorney Lawrence G. Brown announced today that a federal grand jury returned a two-count indictment charging RONALD EUGENE BERNAL, 47, of Susanville, with producing and possessing child pornography.

This case is the product of an investigation by the FBI and the Lassen County Sheriff's Department.

According to Assistant United States Attorney Laurel D. White, who is prosecuting the case, it is alleged that in June of 2008, BERNAL took sexually explicit digital photographs of his minor niece who was visiting his home at the time. When confronted, BERNAL acknowledged the images and admitted downloading other images of child pornography from the Internet.

The maximum statutory penalty for producing visual depictions of minors engaged in sexually explicit conduct is 30 years in prison. The charge also carries a mandatory 15 years in prison. Possessing child pornography carries a possible 10 years in prison. Both charges additionally carry a possible \$250,000 fine, a \$100 special assessment, and possible life term of supervised release. The actual sentence, however, will be dictated by the Federal Sentencing Guidelines, which take into account a number of factors, and will be imposed at the discretion of the court.

The charges are only allegations and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood (PSC), a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, PSC marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information, visit [www.projectsafechildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov) or call the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Eastern District of California and ask to speak with the PSC coordinator.

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