

Marsy's Law for Wisconsin: Attorney General Brad Schimel fights for victims of crime

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Contact:

Brian Reisinger

(715) 579-9679

breisinger@hilltopstrategiesllc.com

[Madison, Wis.] – Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel wrote an op-ed that appeared in the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* over the weekend in honor of National Crime Victims Week, highlighting Wisconsin's proud history on victims' rights and the importance of making sure they remain strong. The op-ed followed Attorney General Schimel traveling across the state with Marsy's Law for Wisconsin last week as part of the [unveiling of a constitutional amendment](#) to ensure equal rights for victims of crime in Wisconsin.

In case you missed it, you can read the op-ed [here](#) or below:

True justice requires meaningful rights for victims

By Attorney General Brad Schimel

We often talk about crime in the abstract. We talk about statistics and trends. We discuss how to prevent people from “becoming victims” and how to bring justice to victims. Today, I want to look for a moment at a more practical side of what it is like for victims. This week, we are commemorating National Crime Victims' Rights Week, which recognizes the importance of victims' rights laws that aim to keep victims informed, able to participate in the criminal justice process, and able to be heard during the process.

We are at an advantage in Wisconsin compared to other states — we've had comprehensive constitutional victims' rights since 1993 and additional statutory victims' rights since 1998. We even have a process for victims to address alleged violations of victims' rights laws, something few states have.

What does this really mean for victims of crime?

Consider that right now, a victim of crime in Wisconsin is reporting a crime to the police. That person is about to enter into a system that is not always easy to navigate — even for those familiar with it. Most of us know how to call the police. But who should you call to find out if an offender was arrested or is still in custody? What if the offender is a juvenile? How will you know what rights you have during different proceedings and stages of the case? Are you allowed to bring an advocate with you to the police interview? Who do you call for an update on the investigation? How will you know about the next court hearing?

Is there a place to wait, away from the offender? How long will it last? Will you need to take off work? Is there assistance available for expenses caused by the crime? If you want to meet with the prosecutor, is that allowed and how is that arranged? Is your personal information going to be discussed in open court? Do you have any privacy rights? Is there a way to tell the judge how much the crime affected you? How can you get the offender to pay the bills associated with the crime? How long will the offender be in custody? Will someone tell you when the offender is released?

These are some of the real questions that arise for many victims as the criminal justice process unfolds. When we talk about victims' rights laws, we are talking about how victims get meaningful answers and assistance to address these questions, and more. Victims' rights are foundational to a justice system that is fair to the crime victims who participate in the process. Law enforcement, prosecutors, county victim-witness staff, court officials, juvenile intake workers, corrections officials and other public officials have victims' rights duties spelled out in Wisconsin's constitution and statutes to ensure victims get the information they need.

The cooperation and involvement of victims during the criminal justice process makes all of us safer, makes cases better, and helps keep offenders accountable.

In my 25 years as a prosecutor, I saw firsthand how important our victims' rights

laws are in Wisconsin. As attorney general, I have an even greater awareness and appreciation for the work being done every day, in every county, to help victims understand and exercise their rights. Victims' rights are not abstract. They determine whether justice is achieved because true justice is not only about the final outcome of the case. It is also about how that victim reporting a crime today will be treated during every step that follows.