

Marsy's Law for Wisconsin: Crime victims' constitutional amendment passes key state senate committee

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[Madison, Wis.] – Legislation to update our state Constitution to ensure equal rights for crime victims passed a key State Senate committee on Tuesday. The Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety passed Marsy's Law for Wisconsin, which follows passage in a key State Assembly Committee earlier this month.

The legislation was authored by State Sen. Van Wanggaard (R-Racine), chairman of the committee that voted today, and State Rep. Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville). Teri Jendusa-Nicolai, the survivor of a brutal attack by her ex-husband and one of the state's most prominent victims' rights advocates, released the following statement after the vote:

"I am living proof of why we need to level the playing field between victims of crime and the accused, and I'd like to thank Sen. Wanggaard, Rep. Novak, Attorney General Brad Schimel, all of our supporters, and each of the lawmakers who stood up today to make equal rights for crime victims a reality in Wisconsin. Our lawmakers continue to show that they support survivors of crime like me, and are determined to support bipartisan legislation that will help keep our communities safe."

Today's vote follows an [11-1 bipartisan vote in favor](#) of Marsy's Law for Wisconsin in

the State Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety. Prior to these votes, Marsy's Law for Wisconsin already had 43 Republican and Democratic cosponsors in the state Legislature, as well as more than [175 key endorsements](#) - gathered in just 150 days - from victims' advocates, law enforcement, legal experts, and others who have joined survivors of crime in their fight. The bipartisan legislation still must be passed by the full State Assembly and the full State Senate, in order to continue the constitutional amendment process.

You can read Teri's story of survival [here](#), and find facts on Marsy's Law for Wisconsin's bipartisan legislation below:

- Marsy's Law for Wisconsin follows a proud tradition in our state of protecting victims' rights, unlike many other states. Wisconsin already has a constitutional amendment on victims' rights that passed in 1993, and was the first state in the nation to pass a Crime Victims' Bill of Rights. The state also is recognized as having some of the strongest statutory rights for victims in the country. This means the changes we are proposing are about making sure victims' rights are truly equal alongside the constitutional rights of the accused - nothing more, nothing less - not introducing new rights as has been done in other states across the country.
- Marsy's Law for Wisconsin strengthens rights that already exist in Wisconsin. The proposed amendment would do two things: Elevate certain rights currently under state statute to be fully constitutional rights, and strengthen other rights that are already part of the Constitution. An example of a right that is the law under state statute but needs to be elevated to the Constitution is the right to put victim restitution payments ahead of any dollars owed to the government. An example of a current constitutional right that needs clarification is the right to be heard throughout the legal process, including release, plea, sentencing, disposition, parole, revocation, expungement, or pardon - as opposed to just disposition.
- Nearly 80 percent of Wisconsinites support updating our state Constitution to ensure equal rights for crime victims. A poll of Wisconsinites found that nearly 80 percent support updating our state Constitution to ensure equal rights for crime victims. More than 80 percent support a victim's right to speak up at more points in the criminal justice process, and 68 percent said they were "more likely" to support a state legislative candidate who supported Marsy's Law for Wisconsin. The bipartisan legislation must be passed in the state Legislature twice, then by voters at the ballot box.