

Marsy's Law for Wisconsin: Marsy's Law for Wisconsin announces bipartisan coalition of support in legislature & across state

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Madison, Wisconsin – Marsy's Law for Wisconsin today announced a bipartisan coalition of support as lawmakers prepare to introduce in the state Legislature a constitutional amendment to ensure equal rights for crime victims. In addition to Republicans and Democrats from across the state signing onto the legislation – which was authored by State Sen. Van Wanggaard and State Rep. Todd Novak – Mothers Against Drunk Driving, the Wisconsin Troopers' Association, and the Milwaukee Police Association join Marsy's Law for Wisconsin's growing coalition.

Colleen Sheehey-Church, MADD National President, said: “Wisconsin has a history of being strong on victims' rights, but MADD wants to make sure those rights are truly equal. The Marsy's Law amendment would add the most important of those rights to the Constitution, further strengthening protections currently in state statute.”

Ryan Zukowski, Executive Director of The Wisconsin Troopers' Association, said: “State Troopers encounter victims on a daily basis, and our members have seen the damage that violence and other crime does to Wisconsin. The Wisconsin Troopers' Association is proud to stand with victims and support Marsy's Law for Wisconsin.”

Mike Crivello, President of the Milwaukee Police Association, Local 21, IUPA, said: “Protecting victims of crime is a crucial part of keeping our communities safe; the Milwaukee Police Association proudly joins Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin’s efforts. Victims of violent crime deserve our full support, which means further securing rights for victims of crime.”

State Sen. Van Wanggaard (R-Racine), the bill’s State Senate sponsor, said: “I’m proud to see key lawmakers from both sides of the aisle joining our efforts to make sure the rights of crime victims are truly equal. As a former law enforcement officer, I know firsthand what crime does to our communities, and we need to protect and care for victims – not coddle criminals who currently have stronger rights than the people they’ve attacked.”

State Rep. Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville), the bill’s State Assembly sponsor, said: “Our effort is attracting support from all ends of the political spectrum because Wisconsinites understand this is not about partisan politics, it’s about equal rights. As someone who resides in rural Wisconsin, I know the permanent rights under Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin can make the difference between a victim feeling safe and seeing his or her attacker at the local gas station.”

State Sen. Dave Hansen (D-Green Bay) said: “The brave survivors affected by crime deserve to be treated with respect and have a stronger voice in the process. Strengthening their rights, particularly with respect to victims of domestic violence and abuse, is an important step to making sure all victims get the justice they deserve. I am pleased to join Golden House of Green Bay in supporting this important effort.”

Teri Jendusa-Nicolai, a survivor of violent crime and advocate for victims’ rights, said: “I’ve experienced what it’s like to be a victim of violent crime as well as of a legal system that can be terrifying and painful, but I’ve also seen how Wisconsinites will come together to strengthen rights for victims. It’s time now to build on the rights of crime victims and the work of our law enforcement and victim advocates – it’s time for equal rights.”

Since first unveiling its legislation April 4, Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin has been co-sponsored by 40 members of the Legislature, in addition to Wanggaard and Novak. MADD, the Wisconsin Troopers’ Association, and the Milwaukee Police Association join a broad coalition of supporters that includes victims’ rights groups like Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Sojourner Family Peace Center in

Milwaukee, and Golden House in Green Bay; Attorney General Brad Schimel and District Attorneys across the state; and law enforcement including the Wisconsin Professional Police Association, Racine County Sheriff Chris Schmaling, and Brown County Sheriff John Gossage.

You can read Teri's story of survival [here](#), and below are key facts on our legislation:

- **Marsy's Law for Wisconsin follows a proud tradition in our state, 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 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.
- **Marsy's Law for Wisconsin is building a statewide legislative and campaign effort.** In order to amend the state Constitution, the proposal must pass two consecutive state Legislatures, then be put to the voters on the ballot. It is currently possible for Marsy's Law for Wisconsin's proposal to be on the ballot in 2019. A [statewide digital ad](#) and billboard advertising campaign has accompanied Marsy's Law for Wisconsin's efforts building support in the state Legislature and with allies across the state.

About Marsy's Law for Wisconsin

Marsy's Law for Wisconsin is a grassroots coalition that has developed a unique

proposal to give victims of crime equal rights in our state, building on Wisconsin's laws and history of leading on this issue. Marsy's Law is named after Marsalee "Marsy" Nicholas of California who was stalked and killed by her ex-boyfriend in 1983. Only one week after her death, Marsy's mother and brother, Henry T. Nicholas, walked into a grocery store where they were confronted by the accused murderer. The family, who had just come from a visit to Marsy's grave, was unaware that the accused had been released on bail. In an effort to honor his sister, Dr. Nicholas has made it his life's mission to give victims and their families constitutional protections and equal rights.

Victims and supporters interested in sharing their stories can email Wisconsin@marsyslaw.us.