

Dept. of Justice: Gov. Walker Signs Bills to Strengthen Human Trafficking Investigations, Protect Crime Victims

Posted on Wednesday, Mar 28, 2018

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

MADISON, Wis. – Today, Governor Scott Walker signed into law two critical pieces of legislation that improve public safety and protect crime victims.

The governor signed Senate Bill 541, authored by Sen. Van Wanggaard and Rep. Joel Kleefisch, which allows Wisconsin Department of Justice's (DOJ) administrative subpoena powers to be used for human trafficking crimes.

“Human trafficking is an insidious crime that affects small and large communities, rural and urban, and it is getting worse as demand continues to grow,” said Attorney General Brad Schimel. “Time is of the essence in human trafficking investigations, especially because human trafficking is largely technology driven. Many trafficking cases begin online, like on social media websites or Backpage.com, making it difficult to investigate. This law is critical for local and state law enforcement to investigate these crimes.”

Governor Walker also signed Senate Bill 704, authored by Sens. Scott Fitzgerald and Jennifer Shilling, and Reps. Joel Kleefisch and Chris Taylor, which makes improvements to DOJ's Safe at Home program, the state's address confidentiality program.

“In less than a year, already 334 Wisconsinites who are victims of abuse or fear for their physical safety have used DOJ's Safe at Home program to feel safe and secure at home and at work,” said Attorney General Schimel. “But this law will offer even

greater security, clarity, and financial independence for Safe at Home participants.”

The Safe at Home program allows participants to keep their actual home, work, or school address confidential by providing them with a legal substitute address to be used for both public and private purposes. The new law strengthens the program by:

- Providing a criminal penalty for intentional disclosure of a Safe at Home participant’s actual address, ensuring that participants have meaningful protections and remedies under the law and offenders are held accountable.
- Expanding the definition of a victim’s protected address under the law to clarify expectations and offer broader protection for participants who wish to keep their full location, not just their address, confidential.
- Supporting participants’ financial independence from abusers by offering greater address protections during the home buying process. By authorizing DOJ to act as a participant’s registered agent and registered office for the creation of a single-member LLC, this law creates a pathway to safer home ownership whereby participants can choose to title their home under an LLC without tying themselves to the property via publicly searchable records.
- Allowing participants, upon their direct consent, to authorize Safe at Home to disclose their actual address for the limited purpose of facilitating the sale of a home, thus removing an unintended barrier to leaving an unsafe location while enrolled in the program.

<https://www.doj.state.wi.us/news-releases/governor-walker-signs-bills-strengthen-human-trafficking-investigations-protect-crime>