

Marsy's Law for Wisconsin: Bipartisan victims' rights legislation scheduled for final passage

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Contact: Myranda Tanck
mt@platform-communications.com

MADISON – Legislation to update the state Constitution to ensure equal rights for crime victims is one step closer to becoming a reality in Wisconsin. Last week, the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly announced their May session calendars, which include votes in both chambers on the widely popular victims' rights initiative. The upcoming votes will be the last legislative hurdle before the measure can go before Wisconsin voters for approval through a statewide ballot.

Introduced for second consideration as Assembly Joint Resolution 1/Senate Joint Resolution 2, the bipartisan victims' rights legislation known as Marsy's Law for Wisconsin was authored by State Senators Van Wanggaard (R-Racine) and Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee) and State Representatives Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville) and David Crowley (D-Milwaukee). With more than 50 listed cosponsors from both sides of the aisle, the bill was approved in January by committees in the Wisconsin State Senate and Assembly and is now scheduled for a full vote of each legislative chamber.

"After more than two years of advocating for strengthening the constitutional rights of Wisconsin crime victims, it is remarkable to have our final legislative victory within reach," said Marsy's Law for Wisconsin State Chair Teri Jendusa-Nicolai, a survivor of a brutal attack by her ex-husband and one of the state's most prominent victims' rights advocates. "As someone who has experienced firsthand the trauma

of being a victim of violent crime, I know how these new rights are going to make life better for those who find themselves in the criminal justice process through no fault of their own. I want to urge our legislators on both sides of the aisle to vote to support equal rights for crime victims, and continue our state's proud tradition of leading on this important issue.”

The bipartisan proposal to strengthen the rights of crime victims passed the Legislature with overwhelming support from lawmakers of both parties on first consideration in 2017. In order to amend the state Constitution, a proposed amendment must pass the Legislature in two consecutive sessions and then be put to the voters for ratification.