

# Senate, Assembly approve 'Marsy's Law' amendment

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The Senate and Assembly have signed off on a constitutional amendment that would add more rights for crime victims.

The measure will now head to voters for a statewide referendum in 2020.

Co-author Sen. Van Wanggaard, R-Racine, said the amendment “sends a message to victims across the state of Wisconsin that the Legislature stands with you. You are not a second-class citizen.”

Many of the protections within the provision are already in place in state statutes, but would be elevated to the Constitution. Wanggaard said that would put victims on an equal footing as defendants.

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But Sen. Fred Risser, D-Madison, said the more than 750-word amendment is significantly longer than the 462 words that comprise the Bill of Rights. He said the changes proposed in the amendment — known as Marsy's Law — should be made in statutes, not enshrined in the Wisconsin Constitution, which already affords them some protections.

Risser also said the amendment amounts to “stroking a billionaire's ego.”

The amendment has been driven nationally by Henry Nicholas, whose sister Marsy was killed by an ex-boyfriend in 1983. The courts weren't required to notify his family when the accused murderer was released on bail, and he and his mother were confronted by him in a grocery store.

The group behind Marsy's Law dropped nearly \$1.2 million lobbying the Capitol in

the 2017-18 session, putting it among the most active groups seeking to influence legislators over the two-year period.

“This amendment doesn’t do anything new. It gives a false sense,” Risser said.

The Senate approved the amendment 27-5 with GOP Sen. Duey Stroebel, of Saukville, joined Risser and Senate Dems Mark Miller, of Monona; Jeff Smith, of Eau Claire; and Lena Taylor, of Milwaukee; in opposing the bill.

Meanwhile in the Assembly, the measure [passed 82-15](#) early this afternoon. Republican Reps. Jeremy Thiesfeldt, of Fond du Lac; Rob Stafsholt, of New Richmond; and Treig Pronschinske, of Mondovi joined 12 Dems in opposing it.