

Sen. Ballweg: Legislation protecting Wisconsin families signed into law

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Madison... Senator Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) and Representative Jesse James (R-Altoona) had their bill, [Senate Bill 627](#) signed into law as [2021 Wisconsin Act 182](#). They were accompanied by Ashley Lien and Becky Guidis who tirelessly advocated for this legislation which allows one parent to change the name of their child, who is 14 years or younger, if the other parent was convicted of certain homicide or sex related crimes.

“I want to thank the brave families who shared their personal stories. The anguish and amount of time and money these families have endured trying to take this step is a testament to the lengths they will go to protect their children,” said Ballweg. “Children are innocent victims in the crimes their parents commit. Being associated with a parent that has committed a heinous crime can cause serious social, safety and mental health consequences.”

Current law provides that a parent of a child under 14 years old may petition to change the last name of their child, so long as they show proof that the nonpetitioning parent has been informed of the request. The courts may require the consent of the nonpetitioning parent if they appear at the hearing or otherwise answer the petition. This becomes an issue when the nonpetitioning parent, who has actively caused mental and emotional stress to their children, is not willing to or actively opposes consenting to the name change.

“After these types of crimes, we entrust the remaining legal parent to make the best decisions for their children every day; changing their child’s name should be no different,” said Ballweg. “I believe this legislation is a productive step for the family to disassociate with their past trauma and begin to rebuild their lives.”

To reach Sen. Ballweg with questions or comments please call (608) 266-0751 or email Sen.Ballweg@legis.wi.gov. The 14th Senate District is located in Central Wisconsin, and is composed of parts of Adams, Columbia, Dane, Dodge, Fond du Lac, Green Lake, Juneau, Marquette, Outagamie, Sauk, Waupaca, and Waushara counties.