

Assembly unanimously passes bill requiring swift processing of sexual assault kits

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Madison, WI – Today, the Wisconsin State Assembly unanimously passed Assembly Bill 36, which would create a timeline for the processing of sexual assault kits by the State Crime Lab. The bill, authored by State Representative David Steffen (R-Howard) and State Senator Jesse James (R-Altoona), builds upon legislation passed last session that worked to eliminate the state’s backlog of sexual assault kits by creating processing and protocol requirements for law enforcement and health care professionals.

“I am thrilled that the Assembly unanimously passed this bill, which will ensure that sexual assault kits are promptly processed by the State Crime Lab. Victims deserve to be prioritized in our criminal justice system and Assembly Bill 36 guarantees that kits are swiftly processed, allowing victims to pursue the justice they deserve,” said Rep. Steffen.

Assembly Bill 36 would require that the State Crime Lab begin processing kits within five days of receipt and complete the processing no later than 60 days after processing began. This timeline would apply for kits involving cases where the perpetrator is unknown as well as cases related to an investigation involving a suspicious death. Under AB 36, all other kits would be required to be processed within six months.

“We must continue partnering with stakeholders across our state on this issue. As a cop, I know how mentally and emotionally exhausting this crime can be on victims. Having these extra efforts in place to speed up the processing time for victims, families and beyond is a win-win for Wisconsin,” said Sen. James.

Throughout the legislative process, the authors of this bill worked closely with the Wisconsin Department of Justice and the State Crime Lab to best craft this victim's rights legislation. The bill will now move to the Senate for consideration.

For more information please contact Representative Steffen or Senator James. Their offices can be reached at Rep.Steffen@legis.wisconsin.gov or Sen.James@legis.wisconsin.gov.