Domestic Violence Bill Headed to Governor?s Desk

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Madison—The state Senate approved a measure Tuesday that will enhance the safety of domestic violence victims in Wisconsin. The bill, Assembly Bill 269, closes loopholes in no-contact conditions that apply at arrest and after conviction. Senate passage was the last step for the bill before moving to the Governor's desk.

Victim advocates praised the legislation's advancement.

"This bill corrects loopholes and gaps in our laws that have for many years caused victims unnecessary frustration and fear." said Patti Seger, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV). "We are thankful the state Senate took this action today."

"Under Assembly Bill 269, violations of the 72 hour no-contact condition, which is in place to protect victims in the immediate aftermath of a domestic abuse arrest, will be treated as seriously as violations of other bail conditions. Under current law, violations are merely a civil forfeiture," said Seger. "The lack of accountability for offenders has put too many victims at risk."

The bill also makes it easier for judges to order no-contact conditions to protect victims after conviction. Advocates report that some perpetrators will continue to send victims harassing letters while they are in jail or prison. The legislation also, for the first time, extends these types of protections to witnesses, who may have testified against the defendant.

"We thank the numerous and bi-partisan group of legislators that supported this AB 269," concluded Seger. "In particular, special thanks go to the Senate author, Senator Van Wanggaard (Racine) and Representative Ballweg (Markesan), the Assembly author of AB 269. We look forward to this bill being soon signed into law."

GPS Monitoring of Batterers

A separate piece of legislation to address domestic violence, Senate Bill 104, also cleared the Senate. SB 104, known as "Cindy's Law," sets up a program for the Department of Corrections to a global positioning system to monitor abusers who have violated domestic abuse restraining orders. The bill still needs Assembly approval.

"We also thank Senator Zipperer (Pewaukee) and Representative August (Lake Geneva) for their work moving this legislation forward," said Seger. "Cindy's Law will give law enforcement and victims a powerful tool to enforce restraining orders and create safety."

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