Governor Signs Several Bills to Enhance Victim Safety

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Madison—Today,Governor Walker signed a number of bills to improve the safety of domestic violence victims and the public at events in Milwaukee, Eau Claire and Madison. Victim advocates hailed the changes.

One bill allows victims of stalking or abuse to change their names confidentially. Under current law, all name change petitions must be published in the local newspaper as legal notices on three occasions, meaning new names can be easily accessed by stalkers and abusers.

Another bill, Assembly Bill 269, will provide criminal penalties for offenders who violate no-contact conditions that apply automatically after domestic violence arrests. Currently, abusers who violate the 72 hour no-contact condition, also known as the “cooling off” period, are not subject to criminal charges.

Teri Jendusa-Nicolai, a domestic violence survivor who was present at the Milwaukee signing of Assembly Bill 269, said, “When my ex-husband returned to the house immediately after being arrested and bailed out, he faced no consequences. I couldn’t escape, and he was only emboldened to continue to abuse and control me. Thankfully, this law is being changed so others will not go through what I endured.”

Senate Bill 104 or Cindy’s Law, also deals with no-contact orders and was signed today as well. The bill creates a program to GPS monitor abusers who violate domestic abuse or other restraining orders. The law is named after Cindy Bischof, an Illinois woman who was killed by her ex-boyfriend after he repeatedly violated a protective order.

“We are grateful the Legislature and Governor Walker have acted on these critical pieces of legislation,” said Patti Seger, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “These enactments continue to build a network of laws and policies to promote the safety of victims and accountability for offenders.”

More bills were signed at the three events, including legislation to provide tools for more effective prosecution of human trafficking and the TraJa Act, which toughens penalties for repeat domestic abusers. The bill is named after Tracy Judd and her daughter Deja Adair. The mother and child were killed by Deja’s father, Tyrone Adair, in Dane County in 2009 as part of a horrific quadruple homicide.

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