Governor Walker Signs Crime Victim Rights Bill

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Madison—Thursday, Governor Walker signed the Wisconsin Crime Victim Rights Preservation Act and other safety bills at Golden House Domestic Abuse Program and Shelter in Green Bay. Advocates for crime victims praised the measure and were thankful that the timing of the signing coincided with the run-up to National Crime Victim Rights Week, which is April 22 to 28.

The Wisconsin Crime Victim Rights Preservation Act ensures that victims who are treated inappropriately by public officials have recourse. The Wisconsin State Constitution says that officials are to treat victims with, “fairness, dignity and respect for their privacy.” However, until now, there was not an enforcement mechanism for this right.

“Crime victims know all too well that defendants are afforded a variety of rights and that there are significant, sometimes drastic, consequences when defendants’ rights are violated,” said Patti Seger, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV). “Now, victims’ right to be treated fairly will also have real meaning behind it.”

The legislation gives the Crime Victim Rights Board authority to investigate and sanction officials who engage in misconduct with respect to crime victims. It also allows a circuit court judge to issue orders related to the enforcement of crime victim rights.

“There could be no better time or place for this signing,” said Seger. “These improvements to our laws will preserve Wisconsin’s status as a leader in providing legal protections to victims and will go into effect as the entire nation recognizes Crime Victim Rights Week, during the last full week of April.”

Seger continued, “We are thankful that Governor Walker chose to sign this bill at a local domestic abuse program. The advocates at Golden House and the other programs and shelters across the state are on the frontlines of fighting for victims’ safety and wellbeing. The Governor got to see firsthand the lifesaving work that local programs perform.”

“We also want to thank Representative André Jacque and Senator Van Wanggaard, the lead authors of the legislation. Without their hard work on behalf of victims, these critical rights would not have come to fruition,” Seger concluded.

More information on National Crime Victim Rights Week can be found here: http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/

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