# Committee Approves SAFE Act

Submitted by tonyg on February 27, 2014 - 1:25pm
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February 27, 2014

**Madison**?The SAFE Act came one step closer to final passage by the State Legislature today as a key Senate committee unanimously recommended approval of the bill. The legislation would implement model court procedures to verify that domestic and child abusers with restraining orders surrender their firearms in compliance with a current law.

?Wisconsin is on the verge of bringing active enforcement to this law, and that has the potential to save the lives of women, children and men across our state,? said Patti Seger, executive director of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin. ?The presence of a gun in a domestic violence situation astronomically increases the chances of homicide, and that is why disarming batterers during the restraining order process has been shown to decrease domestic violence homicides by close to one-fifth.?

The State Assembly already passed the measure early last week. Advocates believe the Senate committee?s approval today should clear the way for the full State Senate to send the SAFE Act to the Governor?s desk.

?We urge the Senate to take up the SAFE Act as soon as it returns to the floor in March,? said Seger.

***Committee vote followed an emotional hearing***

During the public hearing on the bill, which also took place last week, committee members heard testimony from survivors of domestic violence and law enforcement officers.

Teri Jendusa Nicolai recounted how her ex-husband used a gun that he was required to surrender to kidnap her. During the ordeal, he left her for dead in a storage locker. Nicolai said that despite her pleas she couldn?t get officials to force her abuser to surrender his guns prior to the incident.

Another survivor, Sarah Engle from Marshfield, Wisconsin, was nearly killed after being shot in the head by her ex-boyfriend, when he illegal possessed a firearm while subject to a domestic abuse restraining order. Engle?s mother was shot and killed during the incident.

?I am living proof of how important it is that we do everything we can to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers,? Engle told the committee.

Law enforcement officials addressed the committee and said the bill would assist them in keeping victims secure. They also argued the legislation would save the lives of police officers, who are called to intervene in volatile domestic abuse situations.

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