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**SENATE VOTE PUTS CRIME VICTIMS’ RIGHTS AMENDMENT ON NOVEMBER BALLOT**

***Amendment Supported by Madigan, Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault Would Strengthen Protections for Violent Crime Victims***

**Springfield —** Attorney General Lisa Madigan announced that today, during National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, Senate lawmakers unanimously passed a constitutional amendment to better protect crime victims and strengthen their rights. Today’s Senate vote ensures that the amendment will be included on the November ballot for consideration by voters across Illinois.

“Innocent victims of crime deserve every possible protection,” Madigan said. “This amendment would ensure those who have endured the tragedy of violent crime have their voice heard in court and can effectively enforce their rights.”

Senate lawmakers voted 59-0 today to pass HJRCA 1, known as Marsy’s Law, to amend the Crime Victims Bill of Rights in the Illinois Constitution to ensure victims have comprehensive, meaningful and enforceable rights. The amendment, sponsored by Sen. Heather Steans and Rep. Lou Lang, would strengthen the rights of crime victims during criminal court proceedings against their offenders, allow them the right to speak before the court if their rights are violated and ensure those rights are enforceable under the Illinois Constitution.

“Today, crime victims’ rights took a giant step from paper to enforcement. The Illinois legislature gave the green light to its voting residents in November to decide if crime victims have the right to ask a judge whether their constitutional rights were violated in the pursuit of justice,” said Polly Poskin, Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA). “Victims’ rights are no longer illusory in Illinois. The Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault commends the Illinois legislature for its courageous action on behalf of victims’ rights.”

Under the Illinois Constitution, crime victims have a number of important rights, including the right to be notified of criminal court proceedings, the right to be present at the trial and to make a statement to the court at sentencing. However, crime victims do not have the ability to enforce their rights. As a result, in many instances victims’ rights have been ignored.

HJRCA 1 provides that crime victims should be guaranteed the right to be informed of court proceedings, the right to present at hearings and trial, and the right to present a statement to the court about the impact of the crime. The amendment also allows victims to obtain a hearing by the court before any court ruling on a request for access to the victim’s confidential or privileged records. Under the amendment, victims also would be able to appeal court decisions that impact their ability to exercise their rights.

Along with ICASA, the amendment was supported by the Illinois State’s Attorney’s Association, the Illinois Coalition Against Domestic Violence and numerous victim’s rights organizations.

“When we were not allowed to make a victim impact statement at the sentencing hearing for my sister’s killer because the sentence was mandatory, we were only beginning to understand how much it would mean to us not to have our statement in the court record; for the Judge and offender not to hear how the crime had affected us,” said Jennifer Bishop Jenkins, Executive Director of IllinoisVictims.org. “Now with Marsy’s Law for Illinois, that kind of thing will never happen to victims and families again.”

Illinois is currently the only state in the nation that bars effective enforcement of victims’ rights guaranteed in the Constitution by preventing a victim from going to a higher court when those rights are denied.

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