



May 3, 2012

Polly Poskin
217-741-3264

Illinois Fails to Enforce Crime Victim Rights

If you are a crime victim, you expect to find justice in the judicial system. That promise doesn't ring true in Illinois, not with the defeat of Marsy's Law by the House Judiciary II Criminal Law Committee of the Illinois House of Representatives.

"This is a heartbreaking setback for victims of crime in Illinois," said Polly Poskin, Executive Director of the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault. "It is truly disappointing that the Committee members and the Illinois legislature did not fulfill their obligations to help rape victims and all victims of crime by passing this groundbreaking legislation. We are deeply disappointed in this outcome, this decision against victims of crime, but we vow to keep working with the hope to one day pass this amendment."

Marsy's Law, HJRCA 29, would have changed the Illinois Constitution to give victims of crime the opportunity to enforce the rights they were granted by the Illinois Constitution in 1992. Illinois is currently the only state in the nation that bars effective enforcement of rights guaranteed in the constitution by preventing a victim from going to a higher court when those rights are denied.

Victims have the right to make a victim impact statement, the right to be notified of the court proceedings and the right to know if the perpetrator is receiving a plea bargain.

"These are rights we should all have," Poskin said. "There is no reason for Illinois to deny victims recourse if the constitutional rights are trampled on."

The legislation was defeated in committee, falling one vote short of passing when three members voted present. The legislation had previously passed the House by a 116-2 vote. It passed the Senate by a vote of 55-1, but had to return to the House after changes were made to the legislation. That is when the House Committee failed to pass the legislation.

Today, legislators listened to prosecutors, who rallied against the bill by claiming that enforcing victims right would harm prosecutions.

This defeat does not end the mission though. ICASA will continue to work with other victim right's groups to pass Marsy's Law.

"ICASA will not stop fighting for victims of crime. This was a setback, but we will not give up. Crime victims deserve their rights and we will work to support them," Poskin said.

And when that happens there will be Justice for All.