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What They're Saying: Let Voters Have Say On Victims' Rights Law

Cap Times editor emeritus advocates for advancing bipartisan Marsy's Law to April ballot initiative

MADISON – Ahead of members of the Wisconsin Senate and Assembly being sworn in to office for the new legislative session, the Capital Times published a powerful editorial from editor emeritus Dave Zweifel advocating for advancing bipartisan Marsy's Law through the Wisconsin legislature this month to put the issue before Wisconsin voters on this April's ballot.

You can read the full editorial from the Capital Times [here](#) or read excerpts below:

The organization known as "Marsy's Law for Wisconsin" has launched a major advertising push to put a "victims' rights" amendment on the statewide April 2 ballot.

The initiative already passed both houses of the Legislature during the past session and if the new Legislature that convenes next week does the same by Jan. 22, it will automatically go to voters to decide if the amendment should be made part of the Wisconsin Constitution...

The Marsy's Law coalition, which is attempting to pass the law in all 50 states, believes that the law can be strengthened by making it part of the Wisconsin Constitution, making the rights of victims equal to the rights of the accused — nothing more, nothing less, it insists.

"Marsy's Law" is named after a California woman named Marsalee Nicholas who was stalked and killed by her ex-boyfriend in 1983. Only a week after her death, Marsy's mother and brother, Henry Nicholas, walked into a grocery store where they were confronted by the accused murderer. The family had no idea he had been released on bail.

Nicholas, a tech billionaire, decided to honor his sister by seeking a victims' rights amendment added to the constitutions of all 50 states. He is spending millions in each state to advocate for its passage.

Marsy's Law requires authorities, for instance, to notify victims for their own protection if the accused is released from custody and, among other requirements, apprise crime victims of court proceedings involving the defendant. So far, nearly half the states have made the law part of their constitutions...

So, should Marsy's Law indeed become a right in the Wisconsin Constitution? After hearing from dozens of victims who've related their own stories, especially those who've been rape victims and forced, for example, to allow an accused to read their diaries, I'd say yes.

First of all, the law is really no big deal for Wisconsin. We've been living with similar requirements for 25 years now, so making it a constitutional right won't upset anything, yet it will give victims a sense they're protected.

Innocent victims of crimes shouldn't have to suffer even more than they already have.

Let's put the question on the April 2 ballot and let the people decide.

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You can find facts on Marsy's Law for Wisconsin's bipartisan legislation below:

- **Marsy's Law for Wisconsin follows a proud tradition in our state of protecting victims' rights, unlike many other states.** Wisconsin already has a constitutional amendment on victims' rights that passed in 1993, and was the first state in the nation to pass a Crime Victims' Bill of Rights. The state also is recognized as having some of the strongest statutory rights for victims in the country. This means the changes we are proposing are about making sure victims' rights are truly equal alongside the constitutional rights of the accused – nothing more, nothing less.
- **Marsy's Law for Wisconsin strengthens rights that already exist in Wisconsin.** The proposed amendment would do two things: Elevate certain rights currently under state statute to be fully constitutional rights, and strengthen other rights that are already part of the Constitution.
- **Nearly 80 percent of Wisconsinites support updating our state Constitution to ensure equal rights for crime victims.** A poll of Wisconsinites found that nearly 80 percent support updating our state Constitution to ensure equal rights for crime victims. More than 80 percent support a victim's right to speak up at more points in the criminal justice process, and 68 percent said they were "more likely" to support a state legislative candidate who supported Marsy's Law for

Wisconsin. The bipartisan legislation must be passed in the state Legislature twice, then by voters at the ballot box.

About Marsy's Law for Wisconsin

Marsy's Law for Wisconsin is a grassroots coalition that has developed a unique proposal to give victims of crime equal rights in our state, building on Wisconsin's laws and history of leading on this issue. Marsy's Law is named after Marsalee "Marsy" Nicholas of California who was stalked and killed by her ex-boyfriend in 1983. Only one week after her death, Marsy's mother and brother, Henry T. Nicholas, walked into a grocery store where they were confronted by the accused murderer. The family, who had just come from a visit to Marsy's grave, was unaware that the accused had been released on bail. In an effort to honor his sister, Dr. Nicholas has made it his life's mission to give victims and their families constitutional protections and equal rights.

Victims and supporters interested in sharing their stories can email Wisconsin@marsyslaw.us.