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March 12, 2018

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ICYMI: Rape Survivor Kate Thalacker, “Stand With Me In Support of Marsy’s Law. You Will Not Stand Alone.”

Marsy’s Law Supporter and Dane County Chair recounts her story of survival and calls for support for statewide bipartisan effort to strengthen the rights of crime victims

MADISON – In case you missed it, childhood rape survivor Kate Thalacker told her story in a guest column in the *Cap Times*, recounting her attack and calling on other victims to find empowerment through telling their own stories. Now Dane County Chair for Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin, Kate describes the strength and healing she has experienced while fighting to ensure that other survivors are not silenced.

You can read the op-ed below or [here](#).

Kate Thalacker: Stand with me in support of Marsy's Law
The Cap Times
March 9, 2018

When I hear the word “rape,” my chest is instantly filled with the pang of anxiety, my legs go into fight-or-flight adrenaline mode, and I struggle to keep my tears of anger at bay. It has been 27 years since I was sexually assaulted by three of my male cousins, and not a day goes by that my life is not defined by that act.

It was a violent one—a gang rape where I was held down and told it was a game we cousins played, and afterward, I was threatened at gunpoint to never tell what had happened. That moment was the first time I was given the message that the world did not want to hear me, but I didn’t care. My innocence was taken from me and I had no sure footing in this world any longer, but I didn’t care about that either. At age 7 I knew the path I was forced to take.

I told my second-grade teacher at school I was raped, who told my parents and called Child Protective Services. My truth was out and in the tangle of family drama and mixed suggestions, I was constantly and consistently in the view—and lives—of my three perpetrators. I grew up learning to build walls and trust only in myself because I was with adults who refused to listen to my needs as a sexual assault victim. My childhood became a battle to have my feelings understood, to stop being put in the way of my perpetrators, and the need to stop pretending that what they had done was “normal.” I was never given the chance to heal as a child, but through the years of adulthood I found my own space to heal and just as important, to call my own shots.

Believe me, I have tried to prosecute my attackers through Wisconsin’s existing laws. I too have sought advice—even after my years volunteering there—from the Rape Crisis Center of Dane County, only to realize there are no more avenues to take to protect myself from seeing them now: at the grocery store, restaurants, or elsewhere. That is when I realized that there had to be something more I could do. That is when I learned about Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin.

Now, women confide in me with their own stories. In those stories I see healing and strength and so, to find my own healing and my own sense of justice, I refuse to accept what I was told at the end of the barrel with my fists clenched. It is my calling to make sure others are not silenced—to be that light for them to follow, and to give them a strong footing. This is why I am now a strong supporter of Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin. I want to give other survivors that same calling and help them to find their voice.

The message I have been given time and time again is that I cannot hold my attackers accountable for raping me, or let others know the violence they are capable of. I never stopped fighting that battle, even on the crumbling ground I so often found myself on. As Dane County chair for Marsy’s Law, I now stand on the solid ground of Marsy’s Law. I know what this bipartisan effort will do for victims of violent crimes by giving us a voice, a sense of justice, and the ability to inspire others through our own stories.

And now, my own message will be heard loud and clear along with the other voices of victims—now survivors—of crime in Wisconsin. Marsy’s Law is more than a platform for us to come together to share our truth—it is a light that will guide us. It will empower victims to bring criminals to justice while keeping those victims emotionally and physically safe throughout the difficult legal process. Marsy’s Law will allow these survivors to be more than a silent party or just another name on a court document.

The beginning of March marks No More Week. A week when we come together to say NO MORE to domestic violence, sexual assault and abuse. I ask that this week especially, you stand with me in support of Marsy’s Law. You will not stand alone.

Kate Thalacker is the Dane County chair for Marsy's Law. Find out more about Marsy's Law at equalrightsforwi.com.

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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.