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ICYMI: Local Crime Survivor: “I’m Living Proof of Why We Need to Fight for These Rights”

In Beloit Daily News op-ed, Magdalena Kozikowska shares her story and joins the fight to pass Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin

[Madison, Wis.] – In case you missed it, Magdalena Kozikowska, a local survivor of sexual assault, wrote an op-ed that appeared in *Beloit Daily News* in support of Marsy’s Law for Wisconsin. Magdalena shared the story of the brutal attacks she faced, and discussed why she is “living proof” of the need to amend our state Constitution to ensure equal rights for Wisconsin crime victims.

In case you missed it, you can read the op-ed [here](#) or below:

Guest Commentary: Crime Victims Deserve Equal Rights

By: Magdalena Kozikowska

Beloit Daily News

I have always been a strong woman, standing firm on my own two feet. Unfortunately for me, I was sexually assaulted twice in the last 10 years, experiences that tested my strength - but never took it away.

Both times I took the initiative to report it, regardless of the obstacles and stereotypes I'd have to face. Both times, I encountered a justice system that left me feeling afraid and in danger. And both times, I became living proof of why we need equal rights for victims of crime in our state, to give more people the strength to stand up and help stop violence and abuse in our communities.

THERE is an effort in our state to provide these rights called Marsy's Law for Wisconsin, which would provide equal rights to crime victims by updating our state Constitution. I've decided to tell my story of survival because I'm living proof of why we need to fight for these rights.

The first time I was assaulted, my attacker was arrested on two counts of sexual assault and false imprisonment. When it came to this case it was all new to me. I didn't know what to expect, how to fight for my rights, or how to make sure my voice gets heard. Even with all the evidence, my attacker was given a plea bargain resulting in nine months in Huber. Everything was done so quickly I felt confused and assaulted by the system. ...

EIGHT years went by, during which time I fought hard to regain my sense of security. Things were going good until Nov 17, 2015 when I was sexually assaulted and nearly killed by someone I trusted.

My original reaction was, "I'm not going through this again! The system failed me before, my voice didn't matter then, why would it now?" ...

My life would have been different under Marsy's Law for Wisconsin, which would provide rights like being able to speak up at several crucial points in the legal process, not just disposition, to ensure a victims' voice is heard and they can stand up for their safety at times like bail. And it would make sure all victims' rights - respect, privacy, freedom from unreasonable delay - wouldn't be automatically overruled by those of their attacker in court.

WITH this law, my first attacker might have faced true justice, and my second might not have been able to put me through a two-year painful court battle. Maybe both of them would have been stopped sooner. ...

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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.