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**Crime Victims' Constitutional Amendment Passes State Assembly Committee with Overwhelming Bipartisan Support**

*On vote of 10 to 1, state lawmakers in key committee approve Marsy's Law for Wisconsin, advance initiative to ensure equal rights for crime victims*

[Madison, Wis.] – In its first vote ever before state lawmakers, Marsy's Law for Wisconsin passed in a key State Assembly committee on Tuesday with overwhelming bipartisan support. By a vote of 10 to 1, the Assembly Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety passed bipartisan legislation to update our state Constitution to ensure equal rights for crime victims.

The legislation was authored by State Rep. Todd Novak (R-Dodgeville) and State Sen. Van Wanggaard (R-Racine). Teri Jendusa-Nicolai, the survivor of a brutal attack by her ex-husband and one of the state's most prominent victims' rights advocates, released the following statement after the vote:

"I am living proof of why we need to level the playing field between victims of crime and the accused, and I'd like to thank Rep. Novak, Sen. Wanggaard, Attorney General Brad Schimel, all of our supporters, and each of the lawmakers who stood up today to make equal rights for crime victims a reality in Wisconsin. It's rare to see much of anything bipartisan these days, so I'm grateful to see state lawmakers on both sides of the aisle take this first bold step in the long fight to update our state Constitution and keep our communities safe."

Prior to today's vote, Marsy's Law for Wisconsin already had 43 Republican and Democratic cosponsors in the state Legislature, as well as more than [175 key endorsements](#) – gathered in just 150 days – from victims' advocates, law enforcement, legal experts, and others who have joined

survivors of crime in their fight. The bipartisan legislation still must be passed by the full State Assembly and be taken up by the State Senate, in order to continue the constitutional amendment process.

**You can read Teri's story of survival [here](#), and 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 – not introducing new rights as has been done in other states across the country.
- **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. An example of a right that is the law under state statute but needs to be elevated to the Constitution is the right to put victim restitution payments ahead of any dollars owed to the government. An example of a current constitutional right that needs clarification is the right to be heard throughout the legal process, including release, plea, sentencing, disposition, parole, revocation, expungement, or pardon – as opposed to just disposition.
- **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.

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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.