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WPPA STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF MARSY'S LAW

New legislation to extend state's leadership on protecting victim rights

(MADISON, Wis.) –Wisconsin's largest law enforcement group announced its support today for an amendment to the state constitution designed to enhance the protections for the victims of crime. Part of a national effort known as "Marsy's Law," Republican lawmakers State Sen. Van Wanggaard of Racine and Rep. Todd Novak of Dodgeville are introducing a bill that would enumerate a set of protections for crime victims, such as the right to prevent the disclosure of records that could be used to locate or harass a victim, and to be present and heard at all proceedings related to the case. Also backed by Wisconsin Attorney General Brad Schimel, the bill would additionally allow victims to refuse to participate in discovery or be interviewed or deposed by a criminal defendant or their attorney.

"We are proud to support measures to safeguard those most-affected by criminal activity and ensure that they have a meaningful voice in the legal process," said Jim Palmer, executive director of the Wisconsin Professional Police Association. "Enacting Marsy's Law here in Wisconsin will not only represent an important extension of law enforcement's fundamental duty to protect the public, but the state's proud legacy as a national leader in advancing the interests of crime victims as well."

Wisconsin was the first state to enact a Bill of Rights for Victims and Witnesses of Crime, in 1980, and the first state to enact a Child and Witnesses Bill of Rights, in 1983. That same year, voters approved a constitutional amendment recognizing victims' rights. In order for this latest proposal to become law, it must be approved by two consecutive sessions of the Legislature and then approved by a majority of voters in a statewide referendum. It could be on the ballot as early as 2019.

Versions of the law have been passed with bipartisan support in California, Illinois, Montana, North Dakota and South Carolina.

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Representing over 10,000 members from nearly 300 affiliated associations, the WPPA is the state's largest law enforcement group.