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**Constitution Revision Commission Committee Holds Workshop on
Victims' Rights; Marsy's Law for Florida Discussed**
*~Supporters from across the state demonstrate support for Marsy's Law
for Florida~*

Tallahassee, FL – The Florida Constitution Revision Commission (CRC) Declaration of Rights Committee today held a workshop focusing on victims' rights, where a proposal to create a Crime Victims' Bill of Rights in the state constitution, known as [Marsy's Law for Florida](#), was discussed. Members of the committee heard victims' rights presentations and testimony on Marsy's Law for Florida, which would provide victims of crimes with rights and protections equal to those of the accused and convicted.

Immediately following the committee meeting, a group including CRC members, victims and victim advocates gathered at a press conference to support Marsy's Law for Florida.

"Marsy's Law for Florida is about bringing equity to the criminal justice process. I believe victims should have the same rights and protections as those accused or convicted of a crime – nothing more and nothing less. By placing clear, enforceable rights and protections in our state's most powerful legal document, we ensure victims and their families have a voice," said CRC Commissioner Timothy Cerio who put forth a proposal to amend Florida's Constitution to include the victims' right and protections outlined in Marsy's Law ([Proposal 96](#)).

Florida is one of only 15 states that does not provide constitutional-level protections for victims of crimes. Criminals and those accused of crimes have 20 distinct rights outlined in the U.S. Constitution.

"As a survivor of sexual violence, I understand the fear and isolation victims go through. In Florida, the scales of justice are far from balanced. Victims and their families should not fear that they will go unheard or that the criminal justice process will cause them additional trauma or revictimization. They should never feel like an object in an investigation or worse," said Sen. Lauren Book. "That's why we need Marsy's Law for Florida – so victims and their families will finally be given the equal rights, dignity and respect they deserve."

Marsy's Law for Florida would provide victims and their families with basic rights, including the right to be notified of major developments in the criminal case, the right to be informed if any

changes to the offender's custodial status, the right to restitution and the right to have a voice in court proceedings, plea bargains or parole hearings.

"On March 23, 2017, I found my beautiful wife of more than 41 years beaten to death on the floor of our kitchen. While grieving this tragic loss of life, my family has endured 10 court hearings that were strategically derailed while the murderer challenged his own competence. Nothing else has occurred while Debbie's murderer held us all in limbo as he pretended to become mute. There are no sanctions for this delay. There is no cost to him. He can play these games because at his rights are enumerated and all but sacrosanct. If he was to have been uninformed of his rights, charges against him could be dismissed," said Michael Liles. "Sadly, my family and I must await justice while there are no set procedures for victims and their families to even know what rights if any might exist. We need Marcy's Law for Florida."

"A rapist should never have more rights than his or her victim. Too often, victims of sexual violence do not report the crimes committed against them and even fewer pursue prosecution of their attacker. They fear the additional trauma of reliving the crime over and over again through the criminal justice system's proceedings," said Jennifer Dritt, executive director of the Florida Council Against Sexual Violence. "Should they decide to seek justice through the courts, they should have guarantees that they will be afforded the same levels of rights and protections as their attacker. The Florida Council Against Sexual Violence stands fully behind this measure."

Marsy's Law has been enacted in six other states: California, Illinois, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota and Montana. The bill recently passed in Ohio in November with 83 percent of voters voting in favor of Marsy's Law. A survey commissioned by Marsy's Law for Florida in October showed 87 percent of likely Florida voters believe victims should have, at the very least, the same protections in the state constitution as those given to those accused of committing crimes. When read specific ballot language and informed of the background behind Marsy's Law, 85 percent of those surveyed said they would vote for a constitutional amendment that guarantees victims' rights in the Florida Constitution.

"The real-world experience with Marsy's Law shows what an important difference it can make for crime victims. California passed its version in 2008 and many victims and criminal justice professionals have reported a dramatic improvement in the way victims are treated. Contrary to the predictions of critics, fiscal impacts have been minimal to non-existent with extending right to victims in the criminal justice process. Florida can expect significant improvements in its treatment of victims if it adopts a similar measure," said University of Utah law professor Paul Cassell, a former federal judge and federal prosecutor.

If passed by the CRC, Marsy's Law for Florida would be placed on the 2018 General Election ballot as a constitutional amendment. The proposal must receive 60 percent of the vote to be placed in the Florida Constitution.

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About Marsy's Law

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, co-founder of Broadcom Corporation, has made it his mission to give victims and their families constitutional protections and equal rights. He formed Marsy's Law for All in 2009, providing expertise and resources to victims' rights organizations nationwide.