



THE ASSEMBLY  
STATE OF NEW YORK  
ALBANY

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To: Supporters of Child Victims' Act of NY (A2596-S2568)

From: Assemblywoman Margaret M. Markey

Subject: Update on Current Activities

Date: May 5, 2009

I am writing to update you about recent positive developments concerning the Child Victims' Act of New York as public attention and support for this important legislation continues to build. I urge you to continue to speak up about the importance of this bill, which will make it possible for victims of childhood abuse to get justice and will also expose pedophiles who continue to remain hidden. Following are some of recent activities you should know about.

HISTORIC PRESS CONFERENCE IN ALBANY:

The diverse public support for the Child Victims Act of NY was dramatically illustrated when I and Senator Tom Duane, prime sponsor of the bill in the State Senate, met with survivors, supporters and advocates who came to Albany on April 21 to speak out for the legislation. It was an historic moment as Catholics, Jews and Protestants came together to with victims and representatives of a diverse group of advocates to show the impressive range of supporters for the legislation.

NEW SUPPORTERS OF THE CHILD VICTIMS' ACT

In addition to the many organizations and legal and academic professionals who have already expressed their support for the bill, new supporters who have joined them in recent weeks include:

- National Black Church Initiative, a coalition of 34,000 African American churches.
- Parents for Megan's Law and the Crime Victims Center.
- Rabbinical Council of America, the rabbinic arm of Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America, which represents more than 1,000 modern and centrist orthodox rabbis. Also, the Union for Traditional Judaism and the Jewish Board of Advocates for Children.
- The National Organization of Women-New York (NOW) a statewide coalition of more than 30,000 members in 22 chapters around the state.
- New York State Public Employees Federation (PEF)

### MEDIA COVERAGE ABOUT OUR ACTIVITIES:

Media attention for the legislation has also accelerated. Our press conference received coverage on local television in Albany and this was followed by an extended interview segment with Dominic Carter in his “Road to City Hall” program on New York One, the all-news channel in New York City. I was joined for the program by two survivors whose stories dramatized the urgent need for the change in the statute of limitations. They were Stephen Jimenez and Joel Engelman, one of the founders of Survivors for Justice.

Following strong editorials in recent months supporting the Child Victims’ Act in the Albany Times Union, New York Times and Jewish Forward, new editorial page commentary has appeared recently in several major newspapers.

These include an op-ed essay in the New York Daily News on April 6<sup>th</sup> by Cardozo Law School Professor Marci Hamilton. In her essay, “Open a Window to Let Them Seek Justice,” she contrasted the views of Jewish and Catholic clergy about the bill, pointing out that three major Jewish clergy organizations representing some 10,000 rabbis support the legislation, while the Catholic Conference and the New York Catholic League are leading the opposition against it.

Another op-ed article, “We can’t let the clock run out on justice,” appeared in Newsday on April 23<sup>rd</sup>. In his essay, psychologist and author Dr. Richard B. Gartner, argues that the statute of limitations must be lengthened until victims are old enough to face their abusers and the institutions shielding them.

### IMPORTANT NEXT STEPS IN THE ASSEMBLY

After the Child Victims Act of New York received overwhelming support in the Assembly in three previous legislative sessions, another bill has been introduced this year that undermines our efforts. It is A5708a and it proposes only minimal changes to existing statutes of limitations and offers no “window” for those who have been denied justice in the past under existing law.

As the legislative process continues, I am working closely with my Assembly co-sponsors and the leadership to ensure that the Child Victims Act reaches the Assembly floor for a vote in the coming weeks. My goal is to ensure that the bill adopted by the Assembly includes the crucial features that have received widespread support in the past and also addresses legitimate concerns that have been raised. I continue to be cautiously optimistic the Child Victims Act will be adopted by the Assembly, be approved in the Senate and go to the Governor to become law this year.

### IMPORTANT NEXT STEPS YOU CAN TAKE

As the legislative process continues, it is important that all the advocates of the Child Victims Act continue to express their support for the bill and its vital “window” provision to their individual local members of the Assembly and Senate. Thank you for continuing to speak up for justice for victims of child sex abuse and for the exposure of pedophiles who may continue to prey on children if this legislation is not adopted.