

25 MARCH 2013



Re: House Joint Resolution for Crime Victims' Rights

Dear Honorable Congressman Franks and Honorable Congressman Costa,

On behalf of the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Board of Directors, the NOVA Staff, the tens of thousands strong NOVA network, and millions of crime victims, we ardently and fully support your House Joint Resolution representing an Amendment to the United States Constitution for crime victims' rights.

The proposed Constitutional Amendment represents the ideals codified in the Preamble of the United States Constitution, "...in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity..."

We are a nation founded on the Rule of Law. Our NOVA supporters and constituents firmly believe the proposed Constitutional Amendment represents and further affirms the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. The proposed Constitutional Amendment articulates what most Americans wrongly assume to be true, that victims of crime have protections in the US Constitution similar to the accused.

To date, thirty-three of the fifty United States have some form of victims' rights in their state constitutions. This reflects a vast majority perspective of their importance and value. At the same time, there is no consistency for the same citizens across the various states and state constitutional amendments and statutes have only demonstrated a patchwork approach to what should be declared full and protected rights for all Americans.

Some argue that we don't need a Constitutional Amendment represents since victims' rights are found in many state constitutions. However, victims in seventeen states have virtually no victims' rights and protections. Case law demonstrates the dearth of options those victims have and the cruelty they experience at the hands of the justice system. Moreover, even in states with robust victims' rights, those reforms have proven inadequate to change the culture of the justice system in ways that protect and honor the rights of victims and at a national level.

Providing victims long-overdue constitutional rights will not take away rights from the accused. The twenty-three constitutional rights of the accused will remain. We simply seek to rectify that there are currently no rights for victims of crime.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Rhonda I. Barner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Rhonda Barner
President, NOVA Board of Directors