

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2013

Cosponsor the bi-partisan Victims' Rights Amendment

Dear Colleague,

This year marks the 31st anniversary of the Victims' Rights Amendment proposal by President Reagan's Task Force on Victims of Crime. After conducting hearings in ten cities and receiving testimony from hundreds of citizens and public officials, the Task Force found that "In applying and interpreting the vital guarantees that protect all citizens, the criminal justice system has lost an essential balance....The victims of crime have been transformed into a group oppressively burdened by a system designed to protect them. This oppression must be redressed."

The Victims' Rights Amendment provides that a crime victim shall have rights to reasonable notice of, and shall not be excluded from, public proceedings relating to the offense, as well as rights to be heard at any release, plea, or sentencing. Similarly, the crime victim shall receive notice of the release or escape of the accused and restitution. Sixteen years ago, Senator Jon Kyl (R-AZ) and Senator Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) joined together to introduce the first bi-partisan amendment to protect victims' rights.

The American People overwhelmingly support a federal constitutional amendment to protect victims' rights. A recent Luntz poll found that 73% of Americans favor a Victims' Rights Amendment, while only 15% oppose and 12% are unsure. Yet the unjust treatment of crime victims in our justice system continues today across the country, even in states that have enacted strong victims' rights laws. Despite those well-intentioned efforts, statutes are insufficient for the same profound reason cited by the Task Force in 1982: they are not part of the fundamental law of the land, the U.S. *Constitution*. Only inclusion in the U.S. *Constitution* can ensure full, meaningful, and consistent rights for all citizens throughout our nation. Only a constitutional amendment will begin to change the culture that treats crime victims with less than fairness, dignity, and respect to which they are entitled.

As the President's Task Force noted 31 years ago: "We do not make this recommendation lightly....the combined experience brought to this inquiry and everything learned...affirm that...the fundamental rights of innocent citizens cannot adequately be preserved by any less decisive action...[t]he innocent victims of crime have been overlooked, their pleas for justice have gone unheeded, and their wounds-personal, emotional, and financial-have gone unattended."

Please join us as original cosponsors of the bi-partisan Victims' Rights Amendment. Staff may contact Bobby Cornett in Rep. Franks' office at bobby.cornett@mail.house.gov, or 6-4346 or Andy Flick in Rep. Costa's office at andy.flick@mail.house.gov or 5-3341.

Most sincerely,


Congressman Trent Franks


Congressman Ed Royce


Congressman Jim Costa