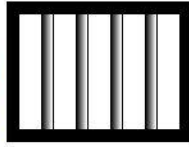


National Organization of Victims of Juvenile Lifers

**NOVJL**

[www.jlwopvictims.org](http://www.jlwopvictims.org)



Parents of Murdered Children

[www.POMC.org](http://www.POMC.org)

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## **HB2525 Pulled in Arizona, Facing Certain Legislative Defeat: A Very Bad Bill for Victims of Violent Crime, Public Safety, and the Rule of Law**

*(Phoenix)* Victims of violent crime, victims' advocates, legal experts, and those concerned for public safety celebrated today the defeat of HB 2525 in the Arizona Legislature. It was pulled from a committee vote in anticipation of its certain defeat. The National Organization of Victims of Juvenile Lifers (NOVJL) and Parents of Murdered Children (POMC) issued this joint statement about this very bad legislation:

"HB 2525 would have retroactively granted parole opportunities to offenders, most of whom are extremely violent murderers, sentenced to natural life without the possibility of parole. Anti-incarceration and pro-offender activists in several states lately have been attempting this approach to prison reform – trying to re-sentence offenders sentenced to natural life through legislation. This proposal was not only horribly re-traumatizing for victims of violent crime, and very bad public policy, for the obvious public safety reasons, and would have freed potentially some of the most violent and heinous criminals in the history of the state of Arizona; but would also pose a serious legal question of fairness. With witnesses dead, or gone, memories faded, evidence long lost, records not saved, etc – how could a fair parole hearing process ever have been possible? These offenders were sentenced to natural life. For the most part, they are there because they killed people – violent, horrible deaths. They were duly and appropriately sentenced to natural life, and that is the sentence they should serve. Prison reform activists should focus their efforts on non-violent criminals and better programs for offenders who will someday be released."

The victims groups were particularly happy to see the prompt defeat of this legislation because it hammers home the most important point of all: offender and prison reform advocates should not be retroactively proposing parole for natural life sentences. Arizona is only the latest state where this has

been attempted. Others include Illinois, California, Michigan, and several others. All have utterly failed legislatively. Clearly legislators all over the nation realize not only what a bad idea this is for victims, for public safety and for law enforcement, but also how unconstitutional and legally unfair it is.

Victims groups stated that the bill would have violated the following highlighted portions of the Arizona Constitution's provisions for victims' rights:

## 2.1. Victims' bill of rights

Section 2.1. (A) To preserve and protect **victims' rights to justice and due process**, a victim of crime has a right:

1. **To be treated with fairness**, respect, and dignity, and to be free from intimidation, harassment, or abuse, throughout the criminal justice process.
2. To be informed, upon request, when the accused or convicted person is released from custody or has escaped.
3. To be present at and, upon request, to be informed of all criminal proceedings where the defendant has the right to be present.
4. **To be heard at any proceeding involving** a post-arrest release decision, a negotiated plea, and **sentencing**.
5. To refuse an interview, deposition, or other discovery request by the defendant, the defendant's attorney, or other person acting on behalf of the defendant.
6. To confer with the prosecution, after the crime against the victim has been charged, before trial or before any disposition of the case and to be informed of the disposition.
7. To read pre-sentence reports relating to the crime against the victim when they are available to the defendant.
8. To receive prompt restitution from the person or persons convicted of the criminal conduct that caused the victim's loss or injury.
9. **To be heard at any proceeding when any post-conviction release from confinement is being considered**.
10. **To a** speedy trial or disposition and prompt and **final conclusion of the case after the conviction and sentence**.

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