

## What is IllinoisVictims.org?

**IllinoisVictims.org** is a website-based advocacy organization that empowers the voices of victims of violent crime in Illinois. We are the only statewide grassroots victims' rights organization in Illinois and provide vital information, networking, and resources. Founded by murder victims' family members in 2006, we are an all-volunteer political watchdog group with no budget. We have members and cover events all over Illinois. We work to educate the public that "Victim" is a legal term, not a term of disempowerment. Affiliated with the National Coalition of Victims in Action, we work with other national victim professionals, as well as our heroes in crime prevention to raise awareness of victims' rights.

**IllinoisVictims.org** is updated regularly to bring vital information to Illinois crime victims from the leaders in the national and state victims' rights movement in law, policy, and advocacy; connecting them to vital victim services. IllinoisVictims.org has been pivotal in monitoring legislation, promoting the interests of victims in Springfield, promoting restorative justice, and appearing in the media. Victims and victim advocates can post their concerns or activities, and are given free web space for victim activities around the state and nation. Our Hero Award is given annually to those who help us in these efforts.

**What are Victims' Rights?** Section 8.1 of the Illinois Constitution grants certain rights to victims. These rights are enshrined in International Law and Treaty, as well as throughout the United States. But there are too few statutes to make those rights enforceable. All too often we have learned it is really up to us to advocate for ourselves, given the scarce resources available for victim services.

**What does IllinoisVictims.org do?** Partnering with many allies around the state, we have already become a significant presence in public policy. There are also many helpful links to important information for victims. We advocate for the following improvements in Illinois Victims' Rights and Services:

- To amend the Illinois Constitution to make victims' rights enforceable such as notification, restitution, fair treatment, to be heard in legal proceedings, and the right to be kept safe.
- The creation of a Victim Ombudsman office at the state level to mediate any concerns victims have in the handling of their cases by local officials.
- The enforcement of the requirement in Illinois law that victims' rights be "conspicuously posted" in all courthouses.
- Victims' services should be tied to the needs of the victims, not to the status of the offender. Due to limited resources, in almost 80% of cases when an offender is either not apprehended, is killed, or is given a plea-bargain and there is no trial, victims receive little to no services at all.
- The extension of victims' benefits to spouses of murder victims, not just their children.
- Better training for all professionals in the system that intersect with victims about victim rights and the importance of sensitivity, accurate information, and fair treatment.
- Universal enforcement of the requirement that all victims are notified from their first point of contact with the criminal justice system of their rights and of resources for them.
- Advance notification to victims who request it of any legislation filed in the state that would retroactively change the sentence of the offender in their case.

To join **IllinoisVictims.org** all we need is your email address – we promise to keep it private and use it only rarely to send you important updates. There is great strength in numbers!

**Go To [www.IllinoisVictims.org](http://www.IllinoisVictims.org) or call 847-446-7073**