

MICHIGAN SUPREME COURT



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TRIBUTE TO CRIME VICTIMS DEBUTS AT SUPREME COURT LEARNING CENTER Sponsored by Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan, new exhibit examines crime victims' legal rights, their role in state justice system

LANSING, MI, April 13, 2011 – A new educational exhibit honoring crime victims and victim advocates will be on display for the first time today at the [Michigan Supreme Court Learning Center](#), located in the Michigan Hall of Justice in Lansing.

The Crime Victims Rights Exhibit will debut in a ribbon-cutting ceremony at 3 p.m. The Crime Victim Services Commission, a division of the Michigan Department of Community Health, funded the exhibit through a grant to the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan, the exhibit's sponsor.

Featured speakers include Chief Justice Robert P. Young, Jr., Attorney General Bill Schuette, state Senator Tonya Schuitmaker (R-Lawton), and William Van Regenmorter, a former state representative and senator. Van Regenmorter authored and successfully advocated for a 1988 amendment to the state constitution to establish crime victims' rights, and also wrote the Michigan Crime Victim's Rights Act of 1985 (MCL 780.751 *et seq.*), which became a model for many other states.

“Senator Van Regenmorter is known as ‘the father of crime victims’ rights,’ and with good reason,” said PAAM President Ionia County Prosecutor Ron Schafer. “Thanks to him, crime victims in Michigan have a right to restitution, to confer with the prosecution, to address the court at sentencing, to be notified about court proceedings, and more. The Crime Victim’s Rights bill created the crime victim’s rights fund, to support compensation and services for those who have been preyed upon by criminals. This Learning Center exhibit tells the story of crime victims’ rights in Michigan.”

The four-part interactive exhibit examines the role of crime victims in the criminal justice system. Viewers can test their knowledge by completing a victim impact statement, putting stages in a criminal case in the right order, and playing a “board game” that illustrates the work of victim advocates.

The Chief Justice said the exhibit will help Learning Center visitors understand the criminal justice process. “From the outside, the criminal process can look like a fight between the defendant and the prosecution; the victims are often invisible,” Young said. “It’s important to remember the people who have suffered emotionally, physically, or financially because of crime, and to be attentive to their needs and rights.”

The Supreme Court Learning Center is open Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.; the 3,800-square-foot public education center offers a virtual courtroom and many other interactive exhibits. For more information, or to schedule a tour, visit <http://www.courts.michigan.gov/plc/> or call (517) 373-7171.

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