



PRESS NOTICE

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U. S. ATTORNEY'S OFFICE FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA OBSERVES NATIONAL CRIME VICTIMS' RIGHTS WEEK

Columbia, South Carolina ----- U.S. Attorney Bill Nettles announced that April 22–28, 2012, will be observed as National Crime Victims' Rights Week, a time to honor crime victims and our nation's progress in advancing their rights. This year's theme, "*Extending the Vision: Reaching Every Victim,*" calls on us to expand the vision that inspired the victims' movement and celebrate the progress achieved thus far. It also captures the spirit and highlights the need for us to assist and serve each and every victim in need of hope and help.

"The U.S. Attorney's Office is deeply committed to assisting victims of federal crimes, ensuring they are afforded their rights under the Crime Victims' Rights Act, protecting them from further harm, and helping them reshape their futures," said U.S. Attorney Nettles. **"This week is a time to raise awareness about the rights and needs of crime victims, the challenges victims face in the recovery process, and the positive impact of those who provide services and support to victims."**

The Crime Victims' Rights Act (CVRA), enacted in 2004, grants victims in federal criminal proceedings certain enforceable rights, including the right to be reasonably heard at public court proceedings and to receive full and timely restitution as provided by law. The District of South Carolina has a dedicated Victim Witness Unit that serves federal crime victims across the District's 46 counties. Members of this unit notify victims of significant case events through the Department of Justice's Victim (DOJ) Notification System (VNS). Such notice enables victims to participate in court proceedings and make their voices heard. According to Department of Justice Statistics, in Fiscal Year (FY) 2011, the U.S. Attorneys' offices provided notice of over 10.4 million case events, including notices regarding criminal charges filed, plea hearings, bond hearings and sentencing hearings.

Notification of significant case events leads to increased victim participation in court proceedings. In FY 2011, Victim-Witness personnel in the United States Attorney's office for the District of South Carolina accompanied 180 victims to court in FY 11. Nationally, Victim-Witness staff accompanied over 28,000 victims to court hearings and trials. Court accompaniment helps ensure that victim participation in court proceedings is meaningful as Victim-Witness personnel can answer questions and explain the federal judicial process.

In addition to notification and court accompaniment, the District of South Carolina's Victim Witness Unit provides essential services to victims, such as making referrals for counseling, securing temporary housing, assisting with access to victim compensation funds, and accompanying victims to court to provide support and guidance during the proceedings. These services provide tools victims need to reshape their futures.

Further information about National Crime Victims' Rights Week is available at <http://ovc.ncjrs.gov/ncvrw/>.