



*Nothing is politically right
that is morally wrong.*

MISSOURI SENATE
JEFFERSON CITY

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Bill Protecting Rape Victims Advances *Rape Kits Remain Cost-free for Victims*

JEFFERSON CITY — Better protections for victims of rape were adopted by the Senate and advanced to the House today. Senate Leader Mike Gibbons, R-Kirkwood, introduced the measure to streamline Missouri's system to pay for the cost of the collection of rape kit evidence. Gibbons passed a measure last year to prevent rape victims from being further victimized by having to pay expensive medical bills associated with collecting the evidence needed to prosecute their case. In 2006, 1,753 rapes were reported in Missouri.

Gibbons was shocked last year to learn that rape victims many times are forced to pay for the rape kit and collection of evidence used in the prosecution of their case.

"The women who fall prey to these horrible crimes should not be further victimized by the process that is supposed to bring justice in their case," Gibbons said. "You would be appalled if your home was broken into and the police handed you a bill for dusting for fingerprints. "

The 2007 measure, House Bill 583, required the Department of Health and Senior Services to make payments to medical providers to cover the charges of forensic examinations for victims of sexual offenses. This year's bill authorizes in statute the move of that fund to the Department of Public Safety and also streamlines the process of reimbursing hospitals and medical providers for their costs, rather than what they charge. The new program draws down federal grant money to help cover the evidence collection, paying more than \$1.25 million for forensic exams and making more resources available for crisis care services and counseling.

"The Senate's passage of Sen. Gibbons' bill SB1159 establishes more effective and efficient responses to survivors of sexual assault and rape, and will allow additional resources to be made available to help assist women and children victimized by sexual offenses in Missouri," said Colleen Coble, CEO of the Missouri Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. "This legislation is an important next step in the work that began last year when Sen. Gibbons' bill no longer allowed rape victims to be charged for the costs of sexual assault evidence collection."

Victims are also able to seek "out-of-pocket" losses from the Crime Victims Compensation Fund to cover the cost of personal property that is seized as part of the investigation.

The bill now advances to the House for similar consideration. To track the legislation visit www.senate.mo.gov and do a "keyword" search for SB1159.

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