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PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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President Calls for Crime Victims' Rights Amendment

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Today's Presidential Action

- In a speech at the Department of Justice, President Bush announced his support of a bipartisan Federal Constitutional amendment for victims of violent crime that has been introduced by Senators Feinstein and Kyl. This amendment would provide specific rights for victims of violent crime that would be protected under the Constitution.

Background on Today's Presidential Action

- In 2000 alone, Americans were victims of 6.3 million violent crimes. During the Presidential campaign, President Bush announced his support for a Federal Constitutional amendment to protect crime victims. Texas is one of 32 states that have state constitutional amendments guaranteeing rights for victims.

- While the states and the Federal government have enacted legal protections for crime victims, those laws are insufficient to fully vindicate victims' rights in the criminal justice system.

- Because rights of the accused are specifically included in the Constitution, it is only just and proper that victims' rights be protected in the Constitution as well. Further, because victims' rights vary from state to state, the Constitutional amendment would ensure that all victims have at least a minimum level of rights in the criminal justice process.

- Today, the President announced his support for the bipartisan Crime Victims Rights Amendment that has been introduced by Senators Feinstein and Kyl. The amendment would provide victims of violent crime in Federal or state court the right to:

- Reasonable and timely notice of any public proceeding involving the crime or the release or escape of the accused;
- Not be excluded from these public proceedings;
- Reasonably be heard at public release, plea, sentencing, reprieve, and pardon proceedings; and
- Decisions that duly consider the victim's: (1) safety; (2) interest in avoiding unreasonable delay; and (3) just and timely claims to restitution from the offender.

- These rights could not be restricted "except when and to the degree dictated by a substantial interest in public safety or the administration of criminal justice, or by compelling necessity." The amendment would not provide the grounds for a new trial, or authorize any claim for damages.

- Any effort to amend the Constitution must be undertaken with great care. The specific language of the Feinstein-Kyl amendment strikes the proper balance in protecting victims' rights in America's criminal justice system.

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White House photo by Tina Hager

President George W. Bush, Mrs. Bush and Sen. Jon Kyl of Arizona pray during the National Prayer Breakfast at the Washington Hilton Hotel Feb. 7. "Since we met last year, millions of Americans have been led to prayer," said the President. "They have prayed for comfort in time of grief; for understanding in a time of anger; for protection in a time of uncertainty."

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- [Office for Victims of Crime Web Site](#)