

18 APRIL 2012



Re: House Joint Resolution 106

Dear Honorable Congressmen Franks and Honorable Congressman Costa,

On behalf of the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) Board of Directors, the NOVA Staff, the tens of thousands strong NOVA network, and millions of crime victims, we ardently and fully support House Joint Resolution 106.

H. J. Res. 106 represents the ideals codified in the Preamble of the United States Constitution, "...in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity..."

We are a nation founded on the Rule of Law. Our NOVA supporters and constituents firmly believe H.J. Res. 106 further affirms the inalienable rights of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. H. J. Res. 106 articulates what most Americans wrongly assume to be true, that victims of crime have protections in the US Constitution similar to the accused.

To date, thirty-three of the fifty United States have some form of victims' rights in their state constitutions. This reflects a vast majority perspective of their importance and value. At the same time, there is no consistency for the same citizens across the various states and state constitutional amendments and statutes have only demonstrated a patchwork approach to what should be declared full and protected rights for all Americans.

Sadly, I have personal experience with the chasms that exist within our justice system. My beloved brother Michael Jeffries, 22, was kidnapped and beaten in Colorado Springs, Colorado and brutally murdered in the Rocky Mountains on November 3, 1981. In the course of the prosecution and conviction of Michael's murderers, I was denied what should be even most fundamental, the right to be heard at sentencing.

Some argue that we don't need H. J. Res. 106 since victims' rights are found in many state constitutions. However, victims in 17 states have virtually no victims' rights and protections. Case law demonstrates the dearth of options those victims have and the cruelty they experience at the hands of the justice system. Moreover, even in states with robust victims' rights, those reforms have proven inadequate to change the culture of the justice system in ways that protect and honor the rights of victims.

Providing victims long-overdue constitutional rights will not take away rights from the accused. The 23 constitutional rights of the accused will remain. We seek to rectify that there are currently no rights for victims of crime.

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Jeffries", is written over a horizontal line. Below the signature is the printed name and title of the signatory.

Hon. Tim Jeffries, KM
President, NOVA Board of Directors