



Van H. Wanggaard

Wisconsin State Senator

Testimony on Senate Bill 146

Thank you, Mr. Vice Chairman and committee members, for attending today's hearing on Senate Bill 146.

Imagine, having a neighbor move in next door with a name you don't know, only to find out that the neighbor was a criminal who changed his or her name, and had previously victimized your family. Senate Bill 146 prohibits a person convicted of a violent crime, as defined by 2023 Act 3, or Wis. Stat. 969.001(3), from changing his or her name.

Most people don't know that current law already prohibits sex offenders on the sex offender registry from changing his or her name. That law has been on the books for decades. But, a sex trafficker, or a murderer, a domestic abuser, kidnapper, or stalker can change their name at will.

Imagine marrying John Smith, only to find out he was previously domestic abuser Jim Johnson, but he had changed his name. The crimes are similar, the penalties and sentencing are similar, but the ability to change your name is different. This makes it more difficult for law enforcement and victims to track individuals, and can lead to further trauma for victims.

Senate Bill 146 is a common sense bill that closes this loophole to protect crime victims and help law enforcement, and it deserves your support. Thank you.

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JOY GOEBEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 5th ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety

Representative Goeben
April 30, 2025

Good Afternoon Chairman Wanggaard, Vice Chair James and members of the committee for the opportunity to share with you about the great things we're doing to protect victims and help law enforcement today.

Senate Bill 146 (SB 146) and Senate Bill 191 (SB 191) are coauthored by each of you respectively. I appreciate your willingness to partner together to tackle these issues to help our communities.

Senate Bill 146, coauthored by Senator Wanggaard, seeks to close a loophole in disallowing persons convicted of a violent crime from legally changing their name, thereby protecting victims from continued abuse and violence. A provision already exists in our state statutes disallowing persons convicted of sexual assault to change their name. This provision exists to ensure the offender isn't violating a restraining order or any other court order.

The ability of individuals convicted of violent crimes to legally change their names presents a serious risk to public safety. Name changes can allow offenders to evade detection, making it more difficult for law enforcement and the public to track individuals with a history of violent offenses. This loophole can also traumatize victims, who may struggle to stay informed about the whereabouts and identities of their perpetrators.

This bill closes that loophole by expanding the name-change prohibition to include all individuals convicted of violent crimes using existing law as a criteria to determine which convicted offenders would fall under the new prohibition. WI 2023 Act 3 Ensuring those convicted of serious crimes cannot easily alter their identities is essential to maintaining public trust and safety. Thank you to Senator Wanggaard for your support and for scheduling this hearing.

Senate Bill 191, coauthored by Senator James, would provide much needed solution to protect our law enforcement officers and State Crime Lab employees who are subpoenaed in criminal cases. Earlier this year, in the course of a First-Degree Intentional Homicide trial, a glaring concern came to light regarding the privacy of witnesses, specifically law enforcement and related professional witnesses.

Current WI statutes outline procedures for serving subpoenas in criminal trials, including disclosing a list of witnesses with the expectation their respective home addresses are included as information on that list.

This poses a grave threat to law enforcement officers and related professional witnesses, who can be targeted, threatened, and harassed at their homes for work done in professional capacity. This not only endangers themselves, but their families as well.

This bill seeks to address these concerns by clarifying relevant statutes to explicitly state that professional witnesses including law enforcement officers and related personnel may provide their work address for the purpose of serving a subpoena, a subpoena may be served at their workplace, and/or a copy of the subpoena may be left at the officer's work address.

The amendment you see on the bill is simply the inclusion of professional witnesses (ie State Crime Lab employees) at the request of the WI Department of Justice. They have registered in favor of this bill.

Again, I would like to thank the senators for their support on this legislation. It is my sincere belief we can work together to pass these bills to benefit our communities and protect the public servants that protect us.



Wisconsin State Lodge *Fraternal Order of Police*



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Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 146 **Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety**

April 30, 2025

Chairman Wanggaard, Vice Chairman James, and distinguished members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety,

I am Ryan Windorff, President of the Wisconsin Fraternal Order of Police, representing law enforcement professionals dedicated to ensuring the safety and security of our communities. On behalf of our members, I submit this written testimony in strong support of Senate Bill 146, which prohibits individuals convicted of violent crimes from changing their names and imposes a Class H felony penalty for violations.

Senate Bill 146 addresses a critical public safety concern by preventing those convicted of violent crimes—such as homicide, battery, kidnapping, stalking, human trafficking, and sexual assault—from altering their identities through name changes. This measure strengthens accountability and protects communities by ensuring that individuals with a history of violent offenses cannot obscure their past, which could otherwise enable further harm or evasion of justice.

Under current Wisconsin law, only registered sex offenders are prohibited from changing their names during their registration period, as outlined in s. 301.47. Senate Bill 146 extends similar restrictions to those convicted of violent crimes, recognizing that such individuals pose significant risks to public safety. By amending statutes including ss. 69.11, 69.12, 69.15, 767.395, and 786.36, this bill ensures that name changes are explicitly prohibited for these offenders, whether through administrative processes, court petitions, or other legal mechanisms.

The need for this legislation is clear. Allowing individuals convicted of violent crimes to change their names creates opportunities for them to conceal their criminal history, potentially undermining victim safety, law enforcement efforts, and community trust. For example, a person convicted of homicide or human trafficking could relocate and assume a new identity, making it difficult for authorities or the public to track their whereabouts or recognize their past offenses. This loophole poses an unacceptable risk, particularly for victims who may live in fear of retaliation or encounter their perpetrators unknowingly.

Moreover, Senate Bill 146 aligns with Wisconsin's commitment to transparency and accountability in the justice system. By imposing a Class H felony for violations, the bill establishes a meaningful deterrent, ensuring compliance and reinforcing the seriousness of these offenses. The Wisconsin Fraternal Order of Police believes



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this measure is a necessary step to enhance public safety and support the work of law enforcement in protecting our communities.

The Wisconsin Fraternal Order of Police respectfully urges the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety to support and advance Senate Bill 146. This legislation will close a dangerous gap, protect our communities, and uphold the integrity of Wisconsin's justice system. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,

Ryan Windorff
President

The Fraternal Order of Police is the world's largest organization of sworn law enforcement officers, with over 379,000 members in more than 2,200 lodges. The Wisconsin State Lodge proudly represents more than 3,600 members in 33 lodges throughout the state. We are the voice of those who dedicate their lives to protecting and serving our communities. We are committed to improving the working conditions of law enforcement officers and the safety of those we serve through education, legislation, information, community involvement, and employee representation.