

**RESOLUTION  
ROCK COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**

David O'Leary, District Attorney  
INITIATED BY

Public Safety and Justice Committee  
SUBMITTED BY



Nick Osborne, Assistant to the County Administrator  
DRAFTED BY

December 5, 2012  
DATE DRAFTED

**URGING STATE OF WISCONSIN TO RESTORE VICTIM/WITNESS FUNDING**

**WHEREAS**, counties are mandated by the Wisconsin Constitution and Wisconsin Chapter 950 to provide certain services to crime victims and witnesses; and,

**WHEREAS**, the State of Wisconsin originally reimbursed counties up to 90% of the cost of providing these services; and,

**WHEREAS**, the reimbursement rate for January through December 2011 was 61.25%, and was reduced to 40% for July through December 2011; and,

**WHEREAS**, a reduction in State funding requires additional County funding to provide the mandated level of service, and;

**WHEREAS**, the Rock County Victim/Witness office is part of the District Attorney's Office and is included in the Rock County Budget; and,

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Rock County Board of Supervisors duly assembled this 16 day of January, 2013, urges the State of Wisconsin to restore Victim/Witness funding to a minimum of 60% of eligible costs.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the Rock County Clerk provide a copy of this resolution to Governor Walker, Attorney General Van Hollen, the Wisconsin Counties Association, and the Rock County Legislative Delegation.

Respectfully submitted:

PUBLIC SAFETY AND JUSTICE COMMITTEE

Ivan Collins  
Ivan Collins, Chair

Hank Brill  
Hank Brill, Vice Chair

Mary Beaver  
Mary Beaver

Brian Knudson  
Brian Knudson

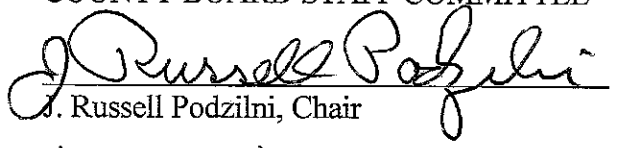
Larry Wiedenfeld  
Larry Wiedenfeld

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URGING STATE OF WISCONSIN TO RESTORE VICTIM/WITNESS FUNDING

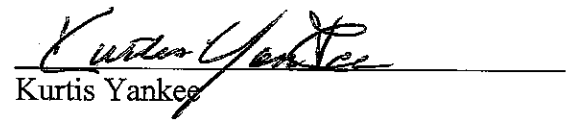
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COUNTY BOARD STAFF COMMITTEE

  
J. Russell Podzilni, Chair

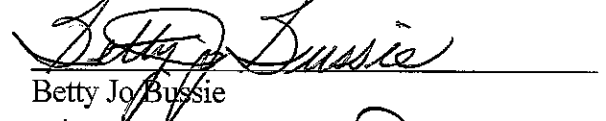
Absent  
Louis Peer

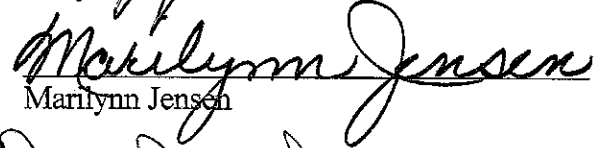
  
Sandra Kraft, Vice Chair

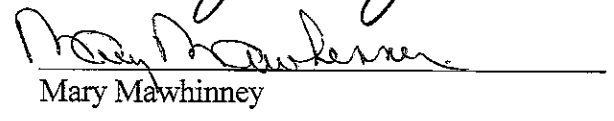
  
Kurtis Yankee

  
Eva Arnold

  
Henry Brill


  
Betty Jo Bussie

  
Marilyn Jensen

  
Mary Mawhinney

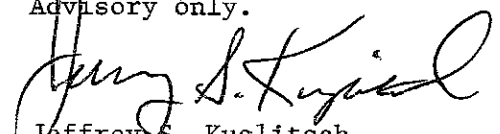
FISCAL NOTE:

This resolution requests the State of Wisconsin to restore Victim/Witness funding to a minimum of 60% of eligible costs. The fiscal impact of any changes to state funding are unknown at this time.

  
Sherry Oja  
Finance Director

LEGAL NOTE:

Advisory only.

  
Jeffrey S. Kuglitsch  
Corporation Counsel

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTE:

Recommended.

  
Craig Knutson  
County Administrator

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The rights of crime victims are protected under both the Wisconsin Constitution and Chapter 950 of the Wisconsin Statutes. These provisions require counties to provide certain services to crime victims and witnesses and provide a sanction of \$1,000 per violation if the District Attorney intentionally fails to provide victims with the rights enumerated under Chapter 950.

The Rock County Victim/Witness office is part of the District Attorney's Office staffing and is included in the Rock County Budget. Chapter 950 allows counties to receive up to 90% of Victim/Witness program associated costs, including salaries, benefits, overtime, staff training, equipment, and contractual services. The reimbursement is contingent on counties providing numerous victim and witness services. The most common services provided under the auspices of this program are escorts to and from court, providing a safe and secure waiting place before and after testifying, conferring with prosecution, providing notification of all court hearings, ensuring a victim's right to make statements to the court, and assisting victims with receiving restitution from financial losses suffered as a result of the crime.

Over the years, the percentage reimbursement to counties has gradually decreased, but slowly enough to allow District Attorneys to make adjustments in the office budgets without sacrificing mandated services. However, the 2011-13 state biennial budget reduced the spending authority for all three funding sources by 10% (General Purpose Revenue [GPR], Penalty Surcharge, and Victim/Witness Surcharge). In addition, in Fiscal Year 2012, \$450,000 was lapsed from the Victim/Witness Surcharge and \$66,000 from GPR. This had the effect of reducing the Rock County reimbursement rate from 61.25% for January through June of 2011 to 40% for the period July through December 2011. This drastic reduction in the reimbursement rate caused a budget shortfall in the District Attorney's budget that fell upon Rock County as another unfunded mandate.

If the significant reduction to Victim/Witness reimbursement rate is not remedied, District Attorney options are either to eliminate staff, jeopardizing their ability to fulfill the state mandated duties, or the County will have to provide property taxpayer funds to make up the difference.

Rock County urges the State of Wisconsin to restore the Victim/Witness Program to a minimum of 60% of eligible costs.