

MISSOURI SURVIVORS' JUSTICE ACT



HB 989/SB 434

The Missouri Survivors' Justice Act fills a gap in our justice system by recognizing the unique realities of survivorship. The Act would give judges the discretion to impose fair sentences for domestic abuse survivors convicted of offenses directly linked to their abuse, promoting fairness and ensuring the flexibility needed to address survivors' unique circumstances.

THE MISSOURI SURVIVORS' JUSTICE ACT WOULD:

- + Create a new mitigating factor during sentencing for domestic abuse survivors in prospective cases
- + Allow incarcerated survivors whose offenses were directly related to their abuse to apply for resentencing
- + Allow judges the opportunity to review evidence of abuse and give them discretion to reduce sentences to better fit the individual circumstances of the case

WHY THE BILL IS NEEDED

Too many survivors of domestic violence are forced into criminal actions to **protect themselves** and end up serving extremely long prison sentences as a direct result of their **abuse**. The Missouri Survivors Justice Act is designed to allow judges the opportunity to reduce excessive sentences and provide the right balance of accountability and fairness.

Missouri has one of the **highest** rates of domestic **violence** in the country. **Around 50% of women** in MO have been victims of intimate partner violence at some point in their lives. **Survivors need to be protected, not punished.**

MISSOURI HAS ACKNOWLEDGED THE INJUSTICE—BUT MORE MUST BE DONE

Missouri lawmakers have addressed this issue before; in 2007, HB 583 allowed women who were sentenced for killing their abuser prior to 1991 to become eligible for parole after serving 15 years. However since then, the scientific understanding around “Battered Spouse Syndrome” has expanded and Missouri’s law has not caught up to current best practices, leaving victims languishing in prison for trying to survive or defending themselves.

MANY STATES HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO PROTECT SURVIVORS

Versions of the Survivor’s Justice Act already exist in other states, including Oklahoma which passed the bill in 2024, demonstrating that modernizing our sentencing system is a safe, practical, and widely accepted approach.

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