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News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Lt. Governor Kinder, Victim Advocates Observe National Crime Victims' Rights Week

JEFFERSON CITY – Lt. Governor Peter Kinder today commemorated a special week honoring crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf as he read a proclamation from Gov. Matt Blunt at the Missouri's National Crime Victims' Rights Ceremony held at the capitol.

"This week we look back at the accomplishments that have been made in helping to protect citizens across this state from malicious crimes," said Lt. Governor Kinder.

"While we recognize our achievements, our eyes remained fixed on the future; making our communities safer for all Missourians. Our state will not be a haven for crime, but rather a beacon of hope for the virtuous."

"Those harmed by crime need help to understand their rights, negotiate the criminal justice system, and access needed services," Gov. Matt Blunt said. "Missouri has found innovative, victim centered approaches to support victims and combat crime. This week we express our admiration for those victims and crime survivors who have turned personal tragedy into a motivating force to improve our response to victims of crime and build a more just community."

"National Crime Victims' Rights Week reminds us that crime can happen anywhere affecting anyone," said Mark James Director of the Department of Public Safety. "In recent years, this country has seen campus massacres, foiled terrorist attacks, and identity theft proving no one is immune to crimes. As we celebrate Missouri's success in victim rights' programs and prepare for next year's challenges, let us not forget our commitment to respect and enforce victims' rights."

Detective Andy Anderson, Coordinator for the Mid-Missouri Internet Crimes Task Force Task Force and Robin Dwiggins a mother who lost her son in a DWI crash involving Meth with her ex-husband at the wheel spoke at the event outlining the theme for the week "Justice for Victims. Justice for All." The ceremony is dedicated to the memory of President Ronald Reagan who declared the first National Crime Victims' Rights Week in 1981.

Currently there are an estimated 231,596 Missouri crime victims. Since 1981 the crime victim assistance field has expanded from a handful of assistance programs to include over 10,000 community and justice system-based programs.

Lt. Governor Kinder and Gov. Blunt are calling on the Missouri General Assembly to pass legislation that adds the sentence of death to forcible rape and forcible sodomy when the victim is younger than 12 years old. The U.S. Supreme Court heard arguments yesterday regarding a similar law in Louisiana allowing the death penalty as an appropriate form of punishment for a criminal convicted of child rape. Lt. Governor Kinder and Gov. Blunt have expressed their support of the law.

Lt. Governor Kinder and Governor Blunt also called on the Missouri Supreme Court yesterday, following a U.S. Supreme Court decision affirming the use of lethal injections, to immediately issue execution orders for all pending cases in Missouri. "It is our hope that strong penalties will help deter these vicious crimes from taking place here in Missouri," said Lt. Governor Kinder.

The following agencies donated their time and effort to making this year's ceremony and awareness week a success: the Missouri Department of Public Safety, the Department of Corrections, the Division of Youth and Family Services, MADD, MCADV, the Missouri Office of Prosecution Services, the Highway Patrol's Filling a V.O.I.D. Program, the Department of Health and Senior Services, the Attorney General's Office, the Missouri Victim Assistance Network (MoVA), the Missouri Department of Labor and Industrial Relations, and the Department of Social Services.

Missourians are encouraged to join crime victims and those who serve them in commemorating National Crime Victims' Rights Week, April 13th-19th. For additional information about National Crime Victims' Rights Week or the crime victim assistance provided by the Missouri Department of Public Safety, please contact Terri Durdaller at (573) 751-4819.

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