



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE **BRUCE McPHERSON**

BM06:130

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Tuesday, September 26, 2006

Contact: Nghia Nguyen Demovic
916-653-6575

Secretary of State Bruce McPherson Applauds Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger for Signing Legislation to Extend Safe at Home Program

Secretary of State Program Provides Needed Support for Domestic Abuse Victims

SACRAMENTO, CA - Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger signed major legislation (AB 2169, Montanez) to extend the Secretary of State's Safe at Home Program to 2013 today.

The Safe at Home Program is administered by the Secretary of State and gives victims of domestic abuse, stalking and reproductive health care workers the opportunity to keep their addresses private via a confidential mail forwarding process. The program also allows eligible voters to keep their voter registration information confidential when registering and voting. The Safe at Home Program was established in 1998 by SB 489, a bill introduced by then Senator McPherson. He authored the second Safe at Home bill (SB 1318) in 2000 that added stalking victims to those eligible for enrollment in the program.

"I am pleased that Governor Schwarzenegger signed this important legislation today. Victims of domestic abuse should not live in fear that simple acts such as opening a bank account or registering to vote will put them in danger, Secretary McPherson said. "I am working hard to inform eligible Californians about this great resource available to them. I want to let eligible victims of domestic violence know that they no longer have to live in fear."

Under Secretary McPherson's leadership the Safe at Home program has drastically reduced enrollment processing time and implemented changes to the program to decrease costs and allow for expansion with little added cost.

Since Secretary McPherson took office in March 2005, enrollment into Safe at Home now takes 1-2 days (down from 4-6 weeks) and a renewal takes less than 24 hours (down from 3-4 days). Secretary McPherson continues to identify ways to make this program more customer-friendly and useful for those who are in need of the services provided by Safe at Home.

Secretary McPherson is implementing the following program enhancements to let eligible Californians know about the Safe at Home Program:

- A new, more accessible Safe at Home website that will act as a domestic violence portal to aid victims in locating support services including; housing, financial aid and information on local shelters.
- Contracted with over 30 new enrolling agencies statewide and training over 400 new domestic violence advocates on Safe at Home enrollment requirements and procedures.
- Secretary of State Domestic Violence Awareness forum to be held October 11 (part of Domestic Violence Awareness Month) designed to educate agencies, organizations and other stakeholders on available resources.

-30-