



NEWS RELEASE

CALIFORNIA SECRETARY OF STATE **BRUCE McPHERSON**

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California Secretary of State Bruce McPherson Hosts “Safe at Home” Forum During Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Outlines major outreach program for newly eligible Californians in remarks to law enforcement and women’s groups

SACRAMENTO, CA – Secretary of State Bruce McPherson hosted a Domestic Violence Awareness Forum as part of a daylong series of events to increase the public’s awareness of the services available to victims of domestic violence. Sponsored jointly with the California State Interagency Domestic Violence Collaborative Committee, today’s forum addressed the prevention, awareness and resources available to victims and survivors of Domestic Violence and brought together an unprecedented group of public and private sector partners.

“Domestic violence is a very serious issue,” said Secretary McPherson. “As public officials, we must do everything we can to protect those who cannot protect themselves. Today’s event was a great opportunity for our Safe at Home Program and the agencies committed to providing assistance to those in need to come together and collaborate on how to improve our already extensive efforts in this area.”

“Today’s domestic violence forum was a great example of public and private agencies coming together to prevent domestic violence and care for its victims. I’d like to thank Secretary McPherson for his leadership in the Safe at Home program and for hosting today’s event. I am confident that we formed new partnerships and found new ways to protect women in this great state,” said Sacramento County District Attorney Jan Scully.

As a result of legislation recently signed by Governor Schwarzenegger, sexual assault victims will now be eligible for the Safe at Home program. The program was previously only available to victims of domestic violence, reproductive health workers and stalking victims. During the forum, Secretary McPherson outlined a major outreach program to let newly eligible Californians know their new rights. Outreach efforts will include:

- Certifying new enrolling agencies and training sexual assault advocates and clinicians on the Safe at Home Program
- Revamping the Safe at Home website to act as a one stop portal for victims of domestic abuse, stalking and sexual assault. Visitors to the website will be able to access shelter, public safety and health information with the click of a button
- Outreach efforts to new and existing public and private sector partners to provide information on the changes and expansion of Safe at Home
- Partnering with new stakeholders to increase public awareness of changes in the Safe at Home program.

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Since Secretary McPherson took office in 2005, the Safe at Home program has significantly reduced the time to enroll a new participant or renew participation in the program and streamlined its administration to reduce costs and allow for expansion. A new enrollment now takes 1-2 days (down from 4-6 weeks) and a renewal now takes less than 24 hours (down from 3 days).

The California State Interagency Domestic Violence Collaborative Committee includes representatives from the California Commission on the Status of Women, California Department of Education, Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, Department of Health Services, Office of Women's Health, Department of Housing and Community Development, Department of Justice, Department of Mental Health, Department of Social Service Cal Works, Office of Emergency Services, Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, Office of the Secretary of State, Victim Compensation and Government Claims Board, California Chamber of Commerce and the California Partnership Against Domestic Violence.