

NEWS RELEASE

Luther Strange

Alabama Attorney General



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AG STRANGE EMPHASIZES COMMITMENT, HONOR FOR VICTIMS DURING NATIONAL WEEK OF RECOGNITION APRIL 10-16

(MONTGOMERY)— On the occasion of Victims Rights Week from April 10-16, Attorney General Luther Strange reiterated his commitment to ensure justice to those who have been harmed, and invited the citizens of Alabama to join in honoring and spreading the message for victims' rights to be recognized and protected. Attorney General Strange will participate in several vigils and victims events throughout Alabama during this week. *(Note: a detailed list and schedule of events is posted at the conclusion of this news release.)*

National Crime Victims Rights Week has been observed since 1981 under the leadership of the U.S. Justice Department's Office for Victims of Crime. On this, the 30th anniversary, the event's theme is "Reshaping the Future, Honoring the Past." This year's observance also brings a broader recognition of the many ways in which people may become victimized, including the daunting modern challenges of man-made disasters such as the catastrophic oil spill in the Gulf Coast, crimes of terrorism, and the pervasive threat of technological crimes of identity theft and other white collar and property crimes.

"The foremost message of Victims Rights Week is one of justice and healing for those who have suffered tragedy," said Attorney General Strange. "Many have experienced terrible losses, have lost their loved ones or have been devastated by severe injuries. My office promises to seek justice on their behalf, to comfort them in their struggles, and assist them with resources and information as they move forward in their lives."

Attorney General Strange said he is encouraged by the theme of "Reshaping the Future, Honoring the Past," describing it as a message of hope and strength: "The strength of victims is that even as they remember the tremendous pain and loss, they are not defeated but stand together to comfort one another and fight for victim's rights."

While recognizing the traditional focus on victims of violent crimes, the focus of National Crime Victims Rights Week of 2011 is broadened in ways that have special significance for Alabama. "Our citizens are struggling to overcome the devastation of last year's massive oil spill in the Gulf Coast, and have been overwhelmed by claims procedures that have been frustrating," said Attorney General Strange. "My office has shown our commitment to the people affected by the oil spill. I have made it my priority to take on a leadership role in the national effort to address this crisis and to make our citizens and our state as whole as possible." Attorney General Strange said it is also important to acknowledge and learn how to protect against the threats of our modern world such as internet stalking and bullying, identity theft and other technological crimes, white collar



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scams that can wipe out one's lifesavings, and the increasingly variety of threats by which people may be attacked and harmed.

Attorney General Strange commended the staff of his Office of Victim Assistance, noting its director Patricia Simpkins DeBortoli and victim service officers Doris Hancock and Ashley Harbin, encouraging victims to contact his office as needed by calling toll-free to 1-800-626-7676 or online at www.ago.alabama.gov.

Since Attorney General Strange took office on January 18, 2011, his Office of Victim Assistance has helped 655 Alabama victims with a variety of issues including assistance at parole hearings, appellate hearings and executions.

In addition to the victim assistance hotline, those seeking consumer information or assistance may call toll-free to 1-800-392-5658. Attorney General Strange emphasized that education is the strongest weapon to fight consumer fraud and urged citizens to protect themselves by being informed and cautious. The Attorney General's consumer protection section answers consumer inquiries and handles complaints against businesses by seeking to mediate between the consumer and business.

Attorney General Strange will be participating in the following events throughout Alabama in observance of National Crime Victims Rights Week:

Tuesday, April 12, in Florence

- Attorney General Strange will speak at a Candlelight Vigil for the Shoals Chapter of VOCAL, Rape Responses and Safe Place of Lauderdale County. This event will be held at **7 p.m. on Tuesday, April 13, at Wilson Park located in downtown Florence at 217 Tuscaloosa Street.**

Thursday, April 14, in Birmingham and in Montgomery

- Attorney General Strange will sign a proclamation for Sexual Assault Awareness Month at the "Take Back the Night" event sponsored by the River Region Sexual Assault Response Team. This event will be held at **4:30 p.m. on Thursday, April 14,** beginning with the proclamation signing in the multi-purpose room of the **Attorney General's Office, located at 501 Washington Avenue in Montgomery.** For this event, visitors may enter through the building's back door that faces Dexter Avenue and the lawn where crosses are set up to commemorate victims of homicide. The proclamation ceremony will be followed by a Take Back the Night rally outside on the steps of the Alabama State Capitol.
- Attorney General Strange will speak at a candlelight vigil to be held by the Jefferson County Victims of Crime and Leniency. This event will be **at 6:45 p.m. on Thursday, April 14, at the Old Jefferson County Courthouse, Room D200, 716 Richard Arrington Jr. Blvd, in Birmingham.**

Friday, April 15, in Montgomery

- Attorney General Strange will speak at the vigil to be held by Montgomery Victims of Crime and Leniency at **7 p.m. on Friday, April 15, on rear lawn of the Attorney General's Office, where the crosses are erected to commemorate victims of homicide, and which faces the State Capitol.**