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Page 1 of 2

## **Standing with Victims: A Commitment That Endures Beyond a Single Week**

*By Alabama Attorney General Steve Marshall*

Each April, our nation pauses to recognize those who have suffered the life-altering impacts of crime and to reaffirm our commitment to justice, healing, and support. National Crime Victims' Rights Week, established by President Ronald Reagan in 1981, was born from a national cry for change, a cry that still echoes today.

This year's theme, "*Kinship, Connection & Healing*," is a powerful reminder of the human bonds that sustain victims in their darkest hours. It reflects the spirit of unity that defines how we serve survivors, not only through laws and legal processes, but through compassion, empathy, and enduring support. These three words—kinship, connection, and healing— represent a collective promise to walk alongside victims on their journey to justice.

For more than 20 years, first as a prosecutor and now as your Attorney General, I've seen firsthand the deep pain and loss that crime inflicts. I've also seen something else: the incredible resilience of victims and the unwavering strength of the families who stand by them. It is those individuals, survivors, and their loved ones, who fuel my work and that of the dedicated team in the Attorney General's Office.

Our Victim Assistance Division exists to serve those impacted by violent crime. Last year, our team reviewed more than 1,400 cases to advocate for crime victims, made hundreds of notifications to keep victims informed of legal proceedings, formally protested over 2,200 parole and pardon requests to keep dangerous criminals off our streets, and continuously supported victims in courtrooms across Alabama. We work to ensure that no victim is left in the dark by sending critical notifications, helping families understand their rights, and connecting them to essential services.

Meanwhile, our Criminal Appeals Division handled more than 1,000 appeals with a 95% success rate in upholding convictions, and our Capital Litigation Division continues to ensure that those who commit the most heinous crimes are held fully accountable.

Still, even with legal victories, justice is often slow, and the needs of victims do not fade with time. That's why we must continue to press for change.

One of the most important efforts underway this year is our work with the Alabama Legislature to pass the Speedy Trial Act. I have partnered with Senate Judiciary Chairman Will Barfoot and House Judiciary Chairman Jim Hill to sponsor this crucial legislation, which is designed to



reduce court backlogs, streamline criminal proceedings, and ensure that violent offenders are brought to justice in a timely manner.

All too often, victims and their families are forced to wait months, or even years, before their day in court. Delays add emotional strain, hinder healing, and erode public confidence in our justice system. The Speedy Trial Act will make targeted reforms to prevent unnecessary delays and ensure that the rights of victims are treated with the same urgency and dignity as those of the accused.

This bill sends a powerful message: in Alabama, we will not tolerate a system that allows violent criminals to linger in legal limbo while victims wait for answers. Justice delayed is justice denied and this legislation is a critical step toward restoring balance and fairness in our courts.

But laws alone aren't enough. We must also foster a culture that puts victims first. That's why our office partners with outstanding local organizations like Victims of Crime and Leniency (VOCAL), Domestic Violence Service Providers, Sexual Assault Service Providers, and Children's Advocacy Centers. These groups are on the front lines by offering comfort, guidance, and resources to families when they need them most.

The road to healing is long, but those who walk it should never have to walk alone. Whether it's a police officer answering a midnight call, a prosecutor preparing for trial, or a counselor helping someone find their voice again, we are all part of a vital mission: to restore hope where it's been broken.

As Attorney General, I pledge that our commitment to victims is not limited to a single week in April. It's a promise we keep every day. To every survivor and every family still seeking justice, know this:

You are seen. You are heard. And you are not alone.

*Steve Marshall is the 48th Attorney General of Alabama.*