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**BRAD D. SCHIMEL**

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**NEWS RELEASE**

**“Justice for Children” protects victims of abuse, neglect**

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MADISON – The Wisconsin State Senate passed two of four “Justice for Children” bills today on a voice vote. Senator Rob Cowles and Attorney General Brad Schimel united last fall to address the needs of Wisconsin’s most vulnerable victims and change the way we protect children who are victims of abuse and neglect.

“The large part of my professional career as a District Attorney was spent prosecuting sensitive crimes and I’ve seen firsthand how child abuse and neglect often do irreparable harm to children and families,” said Attorney General Schimel. “I thank the entire State Senate for passing these two bills and Senator Cowles for leading on it in the Senate. Today’s action helps Wisconsin better protect our children by providing those of us in law enforcement with stronger tools to address physical abuse and neglect of children.”

The two pieces of legislation passed by the Senate today are:

**Senate Bill 323**

Senate Bill 323 grants victims the right to have a trained victim advocate present during an investigation. The presence of a trained victim advocate can actually assist law enforcement in doing their job and gives victims dignity and rights similar to the accused.

**Senate Bill 325**

SB 325 gives prosecutors the ability to charge long-term physical abuse and neglect as a single continuing offense so that justice can be achieved for these child victims and offenders are prevented from committing future crimes against children.

The Wisconsin State Senate has yet to pass SB 324 and SB 326, the remaining two parts of the “Justice for Children” legislative package, which address neglect and reporting of abuse to law enforcement by social service agencies, respectively.

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