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PRESS INFORMATION

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GOV. PAWLENTY SIGNS BILL TO PROTECT VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

St. Paul, MN — The Minnesota Coalition for Battered Women (MCBW) applauds Governor Tim Pawlenty for signing into law the Domestic Violence (DV) Omnibus Bill, a bill that enhances the criminal justice system's ability to protect victims of domestic violence. The bill passed without any opposition in both the House and the Senate and was signed on Monday, May 10, 2010.

The DV Omnibus Bill expands protections in Ex Parte Orders for Protection, clarifies stalking offenses, protects domestic abuse and sexual assault program information from public disclosure, and strengthens criminal system responses to high risk domestic violence offenses.

"Every year, far too many of Minnesota's women, children, and family members are murdered as a result of domestic violence. A legal system that is responsive to high-risk domestic violence offenders is essential to putting a stop to these horrendous personal tragedies. By passing the DV Omnibus Bill, our legislature has taken a reasoned approach to high-risk batterers that will strengthen Minnesota's response and increase the safety of all Minnesotans," said Cyndi Cook, MCBW's Executive Director

According to MCBW's Femicide Report*, 28 Minnesotans were killed as a result of domestic violence in 2009. Although, it is impossible to predict with certainty which batterers will kill their victims, well-documented indicators of lethality include: the victim's attempt to separate from the batter, the batterer's history of violence, and access to firearms. These lethality factors were present in more than 50% of Minnesota's femicides in 2009.

"The most important thing for me is that another family does not have to experience what I experienced," added Anna Gronewold, whose daughter was murdered in a recent domestic violence case, "Prevention is key and this bill will help prevent more murders." She understands the significance of this legislation better than anyone. Her daughter Ashley Sullivan and husband Chet Gronewold, were murdered by Shawn Haugen, her daughter's ex-boyfriend, after he broke into the Gronewold home and shot her daughter and beat her husband to death in January, 2010.

The DV Omnibus Bill will improve our criminal justice system, strengthen our institutional responses to domestic violence, and prioritize the safety and protection of battered women and children across the state, according to Cook.

MCBW would like to thank all the people who helped to pass the DV Omnibus Bill – in the House, Chief Author Rep. Debra Hilstrom, Rep. Michael Paymar, Rep. Paul Gardner, Rep. Maryliz Holberg, Rep. Tony Cornish, Rep. Gail Kulick-Jackson; in the Senate, Chief Author Sen. Mee Moua, Sen. Charles Wiger, Sen. Linda Scheid, Sen. Mary Olson, Sen. Warren Limmer.

The DV Omnibus Bill received support from a broad base of allied agencies including: Attorney General Lori Swanson, the MN County Attorney's Association, MN County Sheriff's Association, MN Chief's of Police Association, MN Office of Justice Programming and St. Paul Police Department. And most importantly, we applaud the courage of those who testified in legislative hearings for their willingness to share their tragic stories - Anna Gronewold, mother of Ashley Sullivan and wife of Chet Gronewold, Jennifer Denmark, survivor of domestic violence, and Wayne Crittenden, the brother of slain Officer Richard Crittenden.

***In 2010, Minnesota there have been an alarming 16 murders as a result of domestic violence.**