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SEN. JACQUE BILL PROTECTING VULNERABLE ADULTS ADVANCES

Committee clears legislation strengthening legal safeguards for adults at risk

MADISON, WI... Vulnerable members of our society that have been targeted by criminals would receive stronger protections under a proposal that cleared a State Senate committee today in a strong bipartisan 6-1 vote.

“This legislation will enhance our adult at risk legal framework by adding more protections that will help ensure safe, fulfilling lives for the defenseless ones among us,” said State Sen. André Jacque (R-De Pere), lead author of the measure.

Sen. Jacque said Wisconsin has a longstanding definition of “adult at risk”, which refers to any adult who has a physical or mental condition that substantially impairs his or her ability to care for his or her needs, and who has experienced, is currently experiencing, or is at risk of experiencing abuse, neglect, self-neglect, or financial exploitation. Unfortunately, there remain a number of protections currently lacking under state law for adults at risk, which Sen. Jacque’s bill will enact:

- Allowing prosecutors to request that a court freeze or seize assets from a defendant who has been charged with a financial exploitation crime when the victim is an adult at risk in order to preserve them for restitution.
- Allowing an adult at risk who is seeking a domestic violence, individual-at-risk, or harassment restraining order to appear in a court hearing by telephone or live audiovisual means.
- Increasing the penalty for forcible sexual misconduct, which is currently a second degree sexual assault, to a first degree sexual assault (going from a Class C to a Class B Felony) if the victim is an adult at risk.
- Allowing a term of imprisonment that is imposed for a criminal conviction to be increased in length if the crime victim was an adult at risk.

“Adults with disabilities are seven times more likely to be the victims of abuse, neglect, or exploitation,” Sen. Jacque said, noting that the bill ([Senate Bill 72](#)) passed the Senate last session as 2021 SB 388 in a strong bipartisan vote of 31-2. The measure has been supported by the Alzheimer’s Association and the Wisconsin Chapter of A-TEAM, a grassroots network of families who work legislatively to advance the cause of people with disabilities in the workplace, society, and home.

This stronger adult at risk legislation is Sen. Jacque’s latest effort to protect our most vulnerable. Last session, Gov. Evers signed a Jacque bill requiring training for guardianship, the most restrictive legal arrangement for incapacitated adults, to make sure decisions are made in their best interests.

Senate Bill 72 must next clear the full Senate and Assembly, and be signed by the Governor, to become law.

Senator André Jacque represents Northeast Wisconsin’s First Senate District, consisting of Door and Kewaunee Counties and portions of Brown, Calumet, Manitowoc, and Outagamie counties.