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Domestic Violence Advocates Applaud Passage of Bills Strengthening Firearm Prohibitions and Protection Orders

Baton Rouge, Louisiana – The Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV) applauded last week’s final passage of several bills expanding domestic violence protections in Louisiana. SB 231 by Senator J.P. Morrell and HB 207 by Representative Larry Bagley are among the bills that cleared their final legislative hurdles in the last week of the 2018 regular legislative session, sending each to the Governor’s desk.

The bills comprise part of LCADV’s robust legislative agenda that sought to tackle the state’s domestic violence homicide rate and provide protections for survivors. “These bills represent incredible progress toward ending domestic violence in Louisiana,” said Mariah Wineski, Executive Director at LCADV. “We applaud this session’s legislative victories and look forward to implementing these changes across our state.”

SB 231 by J.P. Morrell creates a statewide process for the transfer of firearms from those convicted of domestic abuse battery, second or subsequent offense of battery of a dating partner, or with a qualifying protection order. HB 207 by Larry Bagley requires proof of service of protection orders to be transmitted to the Louisiana Protective Order Registry for simplified verification by law enforcement. Wineski credits a strong coalition of advocates and supporters for the bills’ success. “We rely on a diverse network of advocates and allies who care deeply about ending domestic violence,” Wineski said. “Advocates have worked for years toward the passage of these bills, and we are grateful to see the result of these efforts.” The Coalition worked in partnership with several entities to move their legislative package through, including the United Way of Southeast Louisiana, the Lafourche Parish Sheriff’s Office, several district attorneys’ offices, and local domestic violence advocates across the state.

The bills seek to address issues in state law that advocates believe have contributed to Louisiana’s high domestic homicide rate. Louisiana currently ranks third in the nation for the rate of women murdered by men, and in 2017 73% of Louisiana’s domestic violence fatalities were committed with firearms. In 2014, the legislature put into effect prohibitions on firearm possession by domestic abusers. However, there was no implementation process placed into the law at that time, meaning many domestic violence offenders retained access to their firearms. “We know that domestic violence and firearms are a deadly combination. We also know that protection orders are highly effective when they are properly enforced. These bills will save lives by removing firearms from the hands of abusers and facilitating enforcement of protection orders,” said Wineski.

The bills were part of a larger package of legislation supported by LCADV. Bills addressing custody determinations, mandatory training of law enforcement, and classification of certain domestic violence crimes as crimes of violence also await Governor Edwards’ signature.

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The Louisiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence (LCADV) is a statewide network of programs, organizations, and individuals who share the goal of ending domestic violence in Louisiana. LCADV empowers its members and communities through advocacy, education, resource development, and technical assistance. LCADV is dedicated to bringing about change in our institutions, laws, politics, attitudes, and beliefs which will allow individuals to live free of violence. For more information, visit www.lcadv.org