

STATE OF ILLINOIS  
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR  
SPRINGFIELD, 62706GEORGE H. RYAN  
GOVERNOR

July 19, 2002

To The Honorable Members of the  
Illinois House of Representatives  
92nd General Assembly

Pursuant to Article IV, Section 9(b) of the Illinois Constitution of 1970, I hereby veto House Bill 5004 entitled "AN ACT in relation to crime victims."

House Bill 5004 amends the Rights of Crime Victims and Witnesses Act and the Open Parole Hearings Act to require the Prisoner Review Board (the Board) to establish a toll-free telephone number for a small number of crime victims to call regarding parole of an offender. The bill allows a victim of domestic violence or sexual assault to give information to the Board over the toll-free number for consideration at the parole hearing of the person who committed the crime against the victim. The crimes covered by the bill are felonies that involve sexual assault, domestic battery, aggravated domestic battery, violation of an order of protection, or other felony that involved force or violence against a household member.

House Bill 5004 is well intentioned, but does not enhance our existing victims' rights laws. The bill only applies to a few inmates, because it is limited to inmates still serving a prison sentence under the indeterminate parole system that was abolished for offenses committed after 1977. With current file information, the Department of Corrections found only 34 inmates clearly covered by this bill, though a few others could potentially be included as well. Current law affords these and all other victims in parole cases, not just domestic violence or sexual assault related case, the right to be notified in advance of their offender's parole hearing. Today, a victim can submit information to the Board for use in the parole hearing by letter, film, videotape, recording, or other electronic means. The victim may also attend the hearing in person if they so choose. This includes the spouse, parent or child of a victim that was killed in the offense. According to the Prisoner Review Board, all victims and interested parties who still file parole protests, now after well over 25 years in most cases, are accustomed to the existing procedures for objecting to parole. Most choose to appear before the Board to object in person believing that a personal appearance is more forceful than a letter or phone call, which suggests that few victims would avail themselves of this new system.

Finally, there is established by law a statewide notification system for victims and witnesses to check the status of inmates, including those under the parole system. Implemented in early May, the Illinois Automated Victim Notification (VINE) system is a fully automated service that immediately notifies registered users via telephone, pager, e-mail, fax or letter of any change in an offender's custody status. It also provides access to a live person to assist callers with using the system. Many agencies, including the Board, can utilize this system to fulfill any duties regarding providing notification to crime victims and witnesses.

Therefore, I believe current law affords all victims easy and effective ways to provide and receive information from the Prisoner Review Board regarding inmates up for parole and the additional expenditure required to establish and operate this toll-free number is unnecessary.

For these reasons, I hereby veto and return House Bill 5004.

Sincerely,

s/GEORGE H. RYAN  
Governor