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State Public Defender Thompson Praises Signing of Heroin-Related Legislation

(Madison) - The State Public Defender's Office praises the work of Representative John Nygren and thanks Governor Scott Walker for signing into law legislation as part of the Heroin Opiate Prevention and Education (HOPE) package.

This package of bills (Assembly Bills 445, 446, 447, 448, 668, 701, and 702) combines both research-based solutions for the criminal justice system as well as resources for the urgently needed treatment of people battling opiate addiction.

"Heroin abuse has rapidly become one of the leading drug abuse problems in Wisconsin. It affects people from all walks of life and all parts of the state. The alarming increase in overdose incidents, particularly overdoses resulting in death, demanded a significant response. I commend Representative Nygren for taking the lead and creating a broad package of legislation that got unanimous legislative support," said State Public Defender Kelli Thompson.

The State Public Defender's Office (SPD) was proud to join other criminal justice system partners, including the Department of Justice and Department of Corrections, in working on these various proposals.

"Representative Nygren did a tremendous job of reaching out to subject matter experts and offering such widely-supported legislation," Thompson added.

The SPD provides representation for financially-eligible defendants in all cases in which there is a risk of incarceration. The agency participates on the Statewide Criminal Justice Coordinating Council. In addition, SPD staff participate in county justice coordinating councils, which work on evidence-based alternatives to issues such as drug and alcohol addiction.

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