

April 7, 1981

LB 477

that we have not been more sensitive to the needs of victims who suffer the direct consequences of that destruction. The irony is that the term "criminal justice system" depicts precisely the facet of crime in which our society has chosen to place favored emphasis, providing justice to the criminal. I also passed out a chart which shows the rights accorded the criminal and the right that a victim does not have, the injustice to the victim. While crime may be the product of social injustices, and while prevention of crime and criminal rehabilitation are important efforts in the reduction of crime, the major impact of crime on our society can not be alleviated by the traditional functions of the criminal justice system. When that prevention fails, the problem of crime becomes the problem of the victim. Victims of crime suffer a violation of individual privacy and dignity. They feel humiliated, violated and afraid. Their security is shattered. This trauma is often compounded by the treatment of the victim in the criminal justice system. 60% of all criminal case dismissals result from a loss of cooperation from key witnesses who become disenchanted with the criminal justice system. This was testified to at a public hearing, at our public hearing by both Mrs. Marele Young Rafi who is president of the National Organization of Victim Assistance and Ron Lahners the Lancaster County Attorney. LB 477 would promote cooperation and create more trust in the system by helping the victim and the witness through the process. Presently victims are not even informed of the course of the investigation by law enforcement agencies. They are not notified that the defendant has been released from custody. They are not told of the progress of a case or notified of any proposed plea bargaining, which has become a way of life in our courts. Witnesses are often not informed of changes in the court calendar and they come to the courthouse for unnecessary trips. Then they are forced to find seats near the friends and relatives of the offender that they come to testify against. They must look at the offender throughout their stay in the court room. These witnesses should be able to wait in other rooms until their turn to testify. Volunteers would work with the criminal justice agencies as well as with the victims and witnesses. They will try to sensitize the personnel of the agencies to the needs of victims and witnesses. Victims and witnesses have been overlooked too long. For the reasons mentioned previously, LB 477 should be passed. People need to regain confidence in the criminal justice system. Until that happens, many crimes will either