DEBRA BOWEN
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Secretary of State Bowen Calls for Passage of 'Safe at Home' Legislation on Denim Day

SACRAMENTO – As Californians mark Denim Day, Secretary of State Debra Bowen today highlighted the crucial services provided by the Secretary's Safe at Home program and called for the passage of SB 1233 (Oropeza), which makes the program a permanent fixture in the state's tool kit to combat domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

"Safe at Home has helped more than 5,000 Californians regain the security they deserve and start new lives with confidential name changes, allowing them to safely register to vote, have their mail forwarded to a secure location, and more," said Secretary Bowen. "Making the Safe at Home program permanent will assure participants that their anonymity will be permanently protected."

Established in 1999, the Safe at Home program works with enrolling agencies such as district attorneys' offices, health clinics, and women's shelters to protect the identities of eligible survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and stalking, as well as reproductive health care doctors, nurses, volunteers, and patients.

In addition to making Safe at Home a permanent program, SB 1233 requires the program to permanently retain and keep the records of victims in the program who have had their names legally changed confidential. SB 1233 was approved by the Senate Judiciary Committee on a bipartisan vote and will be heard in Senate Appropriations Committee on April 26, 2010.

Denim Day is an annual day of solidarity against sexual violence, bringing attention to the 1999 Italian Supreme Court decision to overturn a rape conviction because the victim was wearing jeans which the court reasoned, invited the attack.

"On Denim Day, men and women across the globe take a stand against sexual assault by wearing jeans to remind people of the absurdity of the court's decision and the need to continue to educate people about sexual assault crimes," added Bowen. "As we stand in solidarity with the survivors, we must also spread the word about the resources available to help people who have become victims."

Thirty-three states have confidential mail-forwarding programs but California's more extensive Safe at Home is widely considered a national model. Currently, nearly 2,500 people are enrolled in Safe at Home, most of whom are women and children.

For more information about Safe at Home and a county-by-county list of enrolling agencies, visit www.casafeathome.org/.

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