

# **Scandals in Amateur, Scholastic and Collegiate Sports Put Spotlight on Issue of Childhood Sexual Abuse**

*Victims of abuse in Syracuse, at prestigious school in NYC, call for passage of Markey's Child Victims Act to get justice for crimes against them*

**Albany, NY** – Assemblywoman Margaret Markey introduced victims in three sports-related incidents of abuse at a press conference here today. They including two men who charge they were abused as ball-boys by a Syracuse University assistant basketball coach and several men who reported they were abused by a coach when they were students at a prestigious private school in New York City as well as a filmmaker who is producing a documentary about sexual abuse in amateur and scholastic sports.

The event is the first in a series of events that the Queens Assemblywoman is holding this week to focus the attention of the Legislature and Governor on the issue of childhood sexual abuse and her Child Victims Act of NY legislation (A5488). Tomorrow she will hold a press conference here to put a spotlight on abuse in religious organizations and schools.

“Childhood sexual abuse is society’s dirty little secret,” she said. “We know that 20 percent of our youngsters grow up as victims of these crimes. Through these programs I want to shed light on the different areas of life and society where abuse occurs and help my colleagues to understand how important it is that we adopt this bill in 2012.”

**SYRACUSE VICTIMS BARRED** --- One case that was featured on Tuesday involves recent revelations of abuse in Syracuse. Attorney Gloria Allred said: “My clients, Bobby Davis, Mike Lang and I accepted the invitation of Assemblywoman Markey to participate in the news conference in support of her bill since it would open up a one year ‘window’ to allow victims of child sexual abuse to obtain justice against the perpetrators who have abused them. We are pleased to have the opportunity to explain why we think that this bill is necessary for adult victims of child sexual abuse for whom justice has been denied, because the statute of limitations now bars them from making a claim.”

**DOCUMENTARY FILM ABOUT ABUSE IN SPORTS** --- Filmmaker Chris Gavagan was also present to discuss his abuse at the hands of a roller hockey coach when he was growing up. He has been working for more than two years to create a documentary film, *Coached into Silence*, about the sexual abuse of boys within the world of organized sports and his own case. Gavagan has served on the U.S. Olympic Committee's Athlete Advisory Group, working for safer training environments and reporting to the Director of Ethics and Safe Sport.

Gavagan said: “I am speaking up about how the window provision of CVA is one of the most important and immediate tools for prevention of further abuses by making the invisible, visible; by giving those who have already fallen victim the opportunity to identify their perpetrator, many more children will be spared the same fate.”

**ABUSE VICTIMS IN POLY PREP CASE HAVE GONE TO FEDERAL COURT** --- Victims in another case discussed were abused while students at Poly Prep Day School in Brooklyn. Their attorney,

Kevin Mulhearn, who represents seven of them in Federal Court, said, "It is time for New York to exit the dark ages, and enter the age of enlightenment, in its response to childhood sexual abuse."

He added, "The existing New York statute of limitations as applied to sexual abuse victims repeatedly causes perversions of justice by denying legal remedies to severely damaged individuals. It does not take into account the reality that most childhood sex abuse victims are just not emotionally capable of dealing directly with their abuse and confronting their abusers until they are in their thirties or forties. The existing statute of limitations thus acts as both a shield, which protect abusers and their equally complicit enablers from facing justice, and a sword, which again wounds those who as children were most grievously betrayed by adults they trusted."

In reference to their current case in Federal District Court in Manhattan, Mulhearn added, "The plaintiffs in *Zimmerman v. Poly Prep, CDS* are confident that we can circumvent the statute of limitations in our particular case because Poly Prep made affirmative misrepresentations and engaged in affirmative misconduct after the sexual abuse acts themselves. Nevertheless, we enthusiastically support Assemblywoman Markey's proposed bill which would allow other victims of sexual abuse to obtain justice against their abusers and the institutions which acted as enablers of abuse through their concealment, silence, and deceit," he said.

"Assemblywoman Markey's Child Victim Act legislation proposes a sane and rational remedy to a society-wide epidemic which impacts each and every one of us. The status quo on this issue is a legal, moral, and ethical abomination -- and needs to be changed. The Plaintiffs in the Poly Prep case are certainly willing to do our part to help bring about that change, applaud Assemblywoman Markey for her noble efforts and strongly encourage others to support this most necessary and right-minded legislation."

**LOBBY DAY ON WEDNESDAY BY ADVOCATE GROUP** --- On Wednesday, February 28, there will be a Lobby Day for the Child Victims Act of New York, organized by the New York Coalition to Protect Children ([www.nyprotectchildren.org](http://www.nyprotectchildren.org)).

Bob Kristan, who heads the Coalition said: "The Child Victims Act will have an enormous impact on the silent epidemic of child sexual abuse in New York: identifying unknown abusers, protecting vulnerable children, and helping victims obtain justice. Only our legislators can make this happen. We're here to carry that message to them."

In addition to visiting legislators to urge them to support the bill, the volunteer lobbyists will also participate in a 12:00 noon press conference with Assemblywoman Markey who will also be introducing survivors of abuse at the hands of private and religious organizations who will talk about their ordeals. Speakers will include victims who successfully took their case against a pedophile to neighboring Massachusetts courts when they couldn't get justice in New York and a young man who suffered abuse at the hands of a yeshiva rabbi in Brooklyn.

Markey's Child Victims Act has been adopted by the Assembly three times, but failed to succeed in the State Senate. The bill will extend the current statute of limitations for child sex abuse crimes by five years, to age 28, and will also completely suspend the civil statute of limitations for one year. This will help expose

older crimes and make it possible to identify previously hidden abusers through the discovery process in court, exposing them and those who have shielded them to ensure they can never abuse a child again.

“Laws in New York are so lax that many perpetrators evade exposure by waiting out the short statute of limitations. I want to change that because pedophiles who are not exposed will continue to abuse yet more children in the future,” the Assemblywoman said.

For Media Information, call Mike Armstrong, 718-651-3185, 917-279-843, 518-455-4755

For Information on the CVA Lobby Day activity, call Bob Kristan of NY Coalition to Protect Children, 212-989-1285