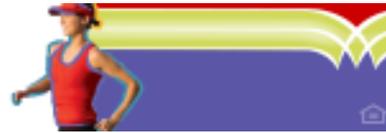


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Database of domestic abusers proposed

MA SEEKS DATABASE OF DOMESTIC ABUSERS

By Steve Geissinger
Mercury News Sacramento Bureau
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SACRAMENTO - California would become the first state in the nation to provide an online database of domestic violence offenders, under a bill proposed Wednesday by a Bay Area lawmaker.

AB 1771, by Assemblywoman Fiona Ma, D-San Francisco, would require the Attorney General's Office to develop an online database that would report the name, date of birth, county, and date of offenses for individuals convicted of felony domestic violence.

The database also would include those convicted of multiple counts of misdemeanor domestic violence. The idea is patterned after the sex offender online databases created by "Jessica's Law."

Victim advocacy groups and law enforcement officials generally support Ma's bill and believe greater disclosure could protect potential victims.

Alexis Moore, a member of the advocacy group Survivors in Action and a victim of domestic violence, appeared at a Capitol news conference Wednesday to support the bill.

"If I had known that my abuser had a domestic violence conviction prior to our relationship," Moore said, "it might have saved me from permanent nerve damage."

Ma cited a case handled by former San Francisco prosecutor Jim Hammer as an example of the need for her proposed law.

The legislator said Nadga Schexnayder and her mother were shot to death in 1995 by a former boyfriend of Schexnayder who had a 20-year history of violence against women.

A law such as the one proposed by Ma, Hammer said,

would "give people the information to do something" to thwart tragedy.

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But one major victims advocacy group, the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, said it had some concerns and has not taken an official position on the proposal. The group said it wanted to ensure that creating the database would not divert funds from existing domestic violence programs in these lean state fiscal times.

"The second concern," said group spokeswoman Camille Hayes, "is that domestic violence victims who have been wrongly accused and convicted of battery could potentially end up on the registry, which would constitute a further mistreatment of these victims by the criminal justice system."

In other action Wednesday in the Legislature:

- A separate bill by Ma, AB 1519, which addresses human-body exhibits, passed its first legislative test on a 7-0 vote by the Assembly entertainment and tourism committee.

Exhibitors say the shows have proven highly popular and educational. One is currently on display in San Jose at the Tech Museum of Innovation. In the displays, skin on the bodies is peeled to varying degrees to show organs, muscle and other parts, then sealed in plastic and placed in differing poses.

Ma's bill would require exhibitors of human remains to provide written evidence of consent from the person or from next of



kin. Violators would face a \$10,000 fine.

Ma is especially concerned because most of the cadavers are Asian.

"As an Asian-American, I know that few people from my community would voluntarily donate their organs or bodies due to the strong cultural preference of leaving their body intact for burial after death," said Ma. "This is more than dead-body trafficking. This is grave-robbing and abuse."

Representatives of exhibitions dismiss the assertion.

Republican Assemblyman Tom Berryhill of Modesto, a bill supporter and an organ donation recipient, said full consent of family members is needed when organs are donated.

- The Senate Health Committee, on a 7-2 vote, advanced SB 107 by Sen. Elaine Alquist, D-San Jose, which would establish statewide safety standards for wave pools.

The bill was prompted by the death of 4-year-old Carlos Flores in July at Great America's wave pool in Santa Clara. Though that park has voluntarily complied with standards in the Alquist bill, there are 19 other wave pools in California.

New rules at the parks would include free use of life vests, requirements for better supervision and mandatory rest periods for participants.

- Assemblyman Lloyd Levine, D-Van Nuys, said he plans to introduce a bill that would bolster a successful plastic-bag recycling program.

Under Levine's AB 2449, which went into effect in July, all 7,000 large grocery and retail stores must take back plastic bags for recycling. The new bill would allow stores to charge up to 15 cents a bag given to consumers, with the money going to cities for trash cleanup.

At the same time, stores would be barred from dispensing plastic bags to customers unless they reduce and recycle at least 35 percent of bags by 2010 and 70 percent by 2012.

Contact Steve Geissinger at sgeissinger@bayareanewsgroup.com or (916) 447-9302.

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