

## Provide Tools to Protect Victims and Witnesses

*Certain classes of crimes, by their nature, are designed to strip victims of their sense of self and security. Gang violence and domestic violence epitomize this paradigm. An integral part of gang and domestic violence is silencing victims and witnesses through intimidation and threats of violence.*

**The Challenge: Particularly in gang and domestic violence cases, the prevalence of witness and victim intimidation is critical in order for these crimes to continue unchecked.**

Gangs create an atmosphere of fear, intimidation, and criminality that can terrorize communities.



Gang violence is growing – rural counties have seen a 64% increase in gangs from 2002-2007; smaller counties saw a nearly 41% increase in gangs. In that same time period, gangs have increased overall more than 25%.

Victims of domestic violence are brutalized by a person whom they know and with whom they share their lives.

The cycle of abuse and control inherent in domestic violence cases makes these victims vulnerable to intimidation and threats aimed to prevent them from pursuing the prosecution of their abuser.

**The Solution: Increase the penalties for witness intimidation and tampering, and strengthen the language of these statutes, in order to provide witnesses and victims with the stronger protection that they deserve.**



Witness tampering and witness intimidation are only E felonies if no physical injury results to the victim.

A defendant charged with a high-level felony has little to deter him from attempting to dissuade witnesses from testifying against him.

*Enhancing penalties will help to ensure that witness and victims are not further victimized by offenders who think that they can use intimidation and threats to sidestep the law.*



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