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Gov. Ivey Announces \$6.3 Million Grant for Victims Assistance

Grant to Pay for 88 Certified Victim Service Officers for District Attorneys' Offices

MONTGOMERY, Ala. – Gov. Kay Ivey today announced the awarding of a \$6.3 million state grant that will allow Alabama District Attorneys to hire 88 Certified Victim Service Officers to assist victims of crime.

Speaking at a news conference this afternoon in the Old House Chamber, Ivey noted the need for more assistance for crime victims.

“The criminal justice system can seem intimidating to people who have been victims of crime,” the Governor said. “I am pleased to support this program, which will provide knowledgeable professionals to help crime victims understand the court process and ensure that they are aware of other community resources that may further assist them.”

The grant was awarded by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs (ADECA) to the Alabama Office of Prosecution Services (OPS), which provides assistance and support for the state’s district attorneys. Representatives of ADECA, OPS and the Alabama District Attorneys Association joined Ivey at the news conference.

“This grant is a major benefit for victims, victims’ families and district attorneys across Alabama,” said Tom Anderson, District Attorney for Coffee and Pike counties and president of the Alabama District Attorneys Association. “In some circuits where money for victim assistance is especially tight, it is a real game-changer. Victims of crimes and their families will have someone in DA offices to both comfort them and assist them through the process of obtaining justice. We are extremely grateful to the governor, ADECA and everyone who assisted in making this grant possible.”

Barry Matson, Executive Director of the Office of Prosecution Services and the Alabama District Attorneys Association, said each of the 42 district attorneys in Alabama will receive funds from the grant to pay Certified Victim Service Officers.

“District Attorneys identified providing more direct services to victims as a priority,” he said.

“No one chooses to be a victim of crime. Through criminal and often violent acts of others, victims are forced into a vast and intimidating criminal justice system. District attorneys, though challenged by meager resources, have long stood with victims of crime. With tens of thousands of felonies a year, it has proved daunting.”

Matson said an increase in violent crimes in recent years means there is an increased need for victim assistance. Following a nationwide trend, Alabama saw a 13 percent increase in violent crime and a 12 percent increase in homicides in 2016.

“This groundbreaking partnership between the Governor, Alabama’s District Attorneys and ADECA is a model for the nation,” Matson said. “With the help of Governor Ivey, Alabama’s District Attorneys will be able to ease the pain and anxiety caused by crime, while providing comfort, information and guidance to victims.”

The Alabama District Attorneys Association’s membership includes the District Attorneys of all 42 judicial circuits, the State Attorney General and the director of the Alabama Securities Commission. The association promotes education and professionalism among prosecutors and advocates for a fair, just and effective criminal justice system.

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