



# DenverDA

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Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Much has been written recently about juveniles who murder, and the Colorado Legislature takes up the issue on March 9<sup>th</sup> with HB1315. This bill seeks to change Colorado's juvenile sentencing structure and retroactively modify and reduce the sentences of approximately 45 juveniles currently serving life sentences for murder.

I am deeply concerned that the surviving family members of these murders have been left out of the discussion. The juveniles who committed these crimes are *not* the victims – they are the perpetrators. Have we forgotten society's responsibility toward the actual victims – the person whose life was abruptly ended and the lives irrevocably altered by the deliberate actions of another?

In 1992 and 1993, Colorado overwhelmingly passed a Constitutional Victim's Rights Amendment and legislation that described society's responsibilities toward crime victims. These laws include a right to be notified of, and to be present at, any sentence modification. HB1315 is a sentence modification that circumvents this right, rendering the wishes of victims' families insignificant.

I wonder – has the legislature considered the rights it afforded victims more than a decade ago? Will lawmakers give notice to *all of the* victims' families affected by the proposed sentencing modification so they may speak *prior* to legislative action? Do they intend to hold themselves accountable to the spirit of the law they enacted in 1993: "...to assure that all victims of and witnesses to crimes are honored and protected...in a manner no less vigorous than the protection afforded criminal defendants." I wonder.

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