

The WATCH Chronicle



WATCH is a court monitoring and judicial policy non-profit located in Minneapolis, Minnesota. WATCH works to make the justice system more responsive to crimes of violence against women and children, focusing on greater safety for victims of violence and greater accountability for violent offenders.

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Jeff Bauer is Vice President of Public Affairs for The Family Partnership, which provides advocacy, counseling and education for the state's most vulnerable children and families.

Securing passage of “Safe Harbor” law came down to forging connections

By Pamela Schmid

Years in the political and non-profit arenas have taught Jeff Bauer the importance of strategy and logistics. But five years ago, when he took the lead role in lobbying for Minnesota's “Safe Harbor” law, Bauer knew that securing its passage would entail much more than the typical trappings of politics.

Thanks to a revelation that came at a refugee camp in Chad years before, Bauer found a different way to make inroads at the Capitol: finding connection.

“All I want to do is figure out the human parts of people and what they care about and why and how we can connect and move the work forward,” said Bauer, vice president of public affairs for Minneapolis-based Family Partnership. “That changes everything about how the work is done.”

Belief in the power of connection drives Bauer as he continues to press for full funding of the statewide system set up by Safe Harbor, which directs sexually exploited youth to supportive services, shelter and housing. In 2015, lawmakers boosted the state allocation for Safe Harbor to \$8 million, up from \$5 million in 2014 and \$2.8 million in 2013.

In 2010, a coalition led by Advocates for Human Rights crafted legislation to protect sexually exploited youth. The Safe Harbor bill defined juveniles “engaged in prostitution” as victims, not delinquents. Bauer, then Family Partnership's policy director, faced a tricky political landscape. The 2010 elections had resulted in a new governor (DFLer Mark Dayton) and a Republican-controlled legislature. Gaining support would have to be about forging new friendships, in reaching out to those who might not seem supportive of his cause.

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“None of this would have happened without the survivors finding the courage to tell their story,” Bauer said. “That’s the sole reason why Safe Harbor exists and has been funded.”

“If I was just going on what I thought I knew, I never would have approached some of them,” he said. “I never would have thought in a million years they’d sign onto something. You only get there by having those relationships.”

Bauer traces his connect-and-persuade approach to a transformative moment nearly four years earlier. He had traveled to Chad to help coordinate The Beautiful Project, an art-therapy program designed to help children heal from the impact of war. The project was part of Infinite Vision Art Publishing, a company Bauer co-founded with artist Pamela Sukhum.

While driving along a rutted road in the desert, Bauer drove over a hill and there, before him, was a sprawling camp of more than 13,000 refugees.

“You pull in and see thousands of children torn from their homes, suffering all of the trauma that war brings with it,” he said. “And I remember this moment so clearly: this overwhelming sense that there’s nothing to be done to fix this.”

Over the weeks that followed, what began as hopelessness evolved into a quiet conviction: “The most important thing I can ever really do,” he said, “is connect in a genuine way while I’m here.”

That revelation colored everything that followed. After Safe Harbor was signed into law in 2011, the coalition went back two years later to ask for the money to implement the statewide framework for supporting exploited and trafficked kids. A strict cost-benefit analysis found that the state would reap a \$30 return for every dollar spent on the model, dubbed “No Wrong Door.”

Proof of savings was one thing, but connecting to lawmakers’ humanity would still be paramount. So the coalition developed a strategy: Any testimony in favor of No Wrong Door needed to include a survivor, an advocate, a prosecutor and a representative of law enforcement. All needed to sit together, delivering the same message.

Some survivors found that telling their stories helped them reclaim their power, said Bauer, who recalled one in particular: “She told me, ‘every time I tell this story I’m going through it all over again. But I’ll tell my story as many times as I have to so nobody else has to go through what I’ve gone through.’ ”

Despite cutting millions from Health and Human Services in 2013, legislators voted to earmark \$2.8 million toward setting up the Safe Harbor system.

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Because Bauer says it will cost around \$13.3 million to fully fund the state’s Safe Harbor system, he and his allies are back at the Capitol, forging more connections. The 2016 Legislature convened March 8. “We’ll go back as many times as it takes,” he said, “to protect sexually exploited kids.” ∞



IN THE NEWS

Don't bill sexual assault victims for exams, Minnesota's AG says

Minnesota Attorney General Lori Swanson is pressing the state's health care providers to refund sexual assault victims who were billed for forensic exams. And the *Star Tribune* has called for a legislative hearing on the matter.

On Feb. 26, Swanson sent a letter to hospitals across the state reminding them that billing rape victims for exams is unlawful. Her letter follows the publication of a [report](#) by [Minnesota Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#) that found severe inconsistencies in how state hospitals treat sexual assault victims.

Under state and federal law, counties are responsible for covering the charges for sexual assault exams. But more than half of professionals interviewed for the study said they knew of patients being charged for exams.

In a March 5 [editorial](#), the *Star Tribune* recommended a "centralized, state-run payment system" to standardize procedures for the state's 87 counties.

Read the *Star Tribune* article [here](#). Read its editorial [here](#). MNCASA's full report can be found [here](#).



Lori Swanson, Minnesota's Attorney General

Supreme Court hears case on gun rights for domestic abusers

A case concerning a law that keeps deadly weapons out of abusers' hands reached the U.S. Supreme Court late last month, with justices hinting that they will likely come down on the side of preserving the law.

In an in-depth [Feb. 29 analysis](#), Slate writer Mark Joseph Stern details oral arguments made before the Supreme Court in a case concerning the so-called Lautenberg Amendment. The 1996 law that forbids anyone convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence crime from possessing "any firearm or ammunition." The case at issue, *Voisine v. United States*, concerns a Maine man convicted of a misdemeanor domestic assault after slapping his girlfriend.

In homes where domestic violence occurs, the presence of a gun boosts the risk of homicide by 600 percent. And many studies prove that people who have battered their partners at least once are vastly more likely to kill them later if they own firearms.

Read the *Slate* dispatch [here](#).

Read the Scotus blog's coverage of the case [here](#).

- In how many jurisdictions would the Lautenberg Amendment be gutted if justices rule in favor of Voisine?
- Which justices were visibly skeptical of the attorneys arguing in favor of Voisine? Which justice broke his decade-long silence on the bench during arguments over the case?

Read the *Slate's* [analysis](#) to learn more.



Cases dismissed for 16 remaining defendants charged in trafficking ring

A scathing opinion by the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals has resulted in charges being dropped against all 16 defendants remaining in an alleged multi-state sex-trafficking ring. [The dismissal announced on March 8](#) by the U.S. attorney's office came after the appeals court disclosed [that a St. Paul police officer had lied to a grand jury](#).

Police Sgt. Heather Weyker led an investigation in 2010 that drew widespread attention and resulted in charges against more than 30 suspects. But a March 2 ruling by the Court of Appeals found the prosecutor's two key witnesses to be "unworthy of belief." It also prompted the release two days later of some of the 16 defendants whose cases are pending. Federal authorities have since dropped charges against the remaining defendants. St. Paul police are pursuing an internal affairs investigation into the matter after calling into question Weyker's credibility.

Read the March 9 *Star Tribune* report [here](#); read its March 5 report [here](#).

Read the report in the *Pioneer Press* [here](#).



National Domestic Violence Hotline celebrates its 20th anniversary

Since taking its first call 20 years ago, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has become the nation's leading service for people suffering from domestic violence. This month, the hotline—based in Austin, Texas—is expected to take its 4 millionth call.

Katie Ray-Jones, the hotline's chief executive officer, says high-profile examples of domestic violence, such as video of football star Ray Rice punching his fiancée, have brought attention to the issue and raised awareness of the hotline's services. Despite the progress, Ray-Jones told the [Austin-American Statesman](#) that the hotline still needs to educate people about prevention, rather than relying on intervention.

- Read the *Austin-American Statesman* article [here](#).
- Learn more about the National DV Hotline [here](#).

- The NFL partnered with the National DV hotline following the release of the Ray Rice video. What specifically has the league's partnership provided to the hotline?
- Besides focusing on prevention, what are other steps Ray-Jones says the hotline needs to do looking forward?

COURT MONITORING BULLETIN: Kudos Corner

Judge Patrick D. Robben



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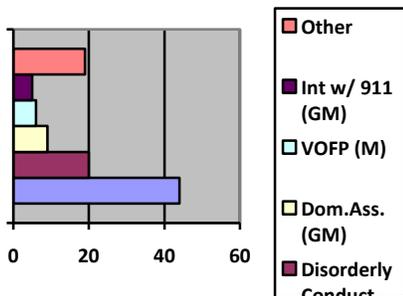
This month, WATCH is pleased to bring attention to a judge who has received numerous compliments from volunteer monitors in recent months. Hennepin County District Judge Patrick D. Robben, appointed by Gov. Tim Pawlenty in 2010, serves as assistant presiding judge in the Family Court Division. He was elected in 2012; his current term runs through January 2019.

Below is a compilation of monitors’ observations of Judge Robben’s conduct in the courtroom:

- “Judge, clerk and deputy were all helpful and kind.”
- “All of the cases started in a timely manner. Robben was very considerate of time restraints of the petitioner and respondent when making decisions.”
- “Took a great deal of effort to make everyone feel heard.”
- “Judge had no problem repeating or rephrasing for the petitioner or respondent.”
- “Very good at laying out the options for petitioner and respondent in plain terms. Not condescending when people didn’t understand, willing to take the time to explain.”
- “Judge was very impartial—never made big facial expressions to convey his thoughts; listened thoroughly to all issues brought up.”



DV Court: a breakdown



WATCH volunteers have monitored 70 hearings in Hennepin County Domestic Violence Court between November 19, 2015 and February 25, 2016. Of them, 44 have involved misdemeanor domestic-assault offenses. Twenty cases have involved offenses of misdemeanor disorderly conduct, while nine involved charges of gross-misdemeanor domestic assault. Other offenses included violations of Orders for Protection (6); interfering with a 911 call (five gross misdemeanor and one misdemeanor); violations of Domestic Violence No Contact Orders (three gross misdemeanor, six misdemeanor); assault (2), trespassing (1) and stalking (1).



SEX TRAFFICKING UPDATE

Maple Grove woman pleads guilty

A 45-year-old Maple Grove woman is awaiting sentencing after pleading guilty to a charge of promoting prostitution.

Terri Ann Milstein was charged in May 2015 with two counts of promoting prostitution following a sting at a Plymouth hotel. Officers later recovered a computer folder at Milstein's townhouse that listed 27 female victims, along with their state IDs and social security cards.

According to the complaint, an investigator posing as a customer arranged through a call screener—who turned out to be Milstein—to meet a female in a Plymouth hotel room. After the female showed up, the investigator told her he wanted to call off the meeting. Milstein told the investigator by phone that he would have to pay a \$100 cancellation fee, which he did. Under questioning by officers, the female identified Milstein as the screener, and said she worked for her. The female victim said Milstein had her deposit her prostitution earnings into one of three bank accounts in Milstein's name. Bank records from those accounts revealed hundreds of cash deposits totaling more than \$175,000.

The investigator later set up an undercover date with a second female, who subsequently told police she had been employed by Milstein for several years. The female victim said she worked every day for Milstein, giving her an estimated \$600 per day, and that Milstein had more than 10 females working for her.

The victim said Milstein fined her females employees if they didn't call her by 10 a.m. every morning; if they spent more than the time allotted with their client; or if they had contact with clients outside work.

Milstein is to be sentenced April 28. She faces a maximum sentence of 15 years in prison.

Luger is latest Gold WATCH recipient

Andrew Luger, the U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota, will be honored next month with the 2016 Gold WATCH award.

The award is intended to recognize Mr. Luger's "tireless work on behalf of sex trafficking victims," said Amy Walsh Kern, WATCH executive director. "He used his powerful platform to prioritize sex trafficking cases, to vigorously prosecute them—even personally trying a trafficking case himself—and to bring needed public attention to the cases which are so often hidden and unreported."

WATCH has awarded 22 Gold WATCH recipients in the past two decades. ∞



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