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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 29, 2012

GROUPS ASK FOR PROTECTION OF VICTIMS' IDENTITIES IN SANDUSKY CASE

Bellefonte, PA – Protecting the privacy and dignity of victims in the *Commonwealth of Pennsylvania vs. Gerald A. Sandusky* case requires the use of pseudonyms to shield victims' identity during the trial and closing the proceedings to outsiders when victims testify, according to an *amicus curiae* brief filed by the National Center for Victims of Crime, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, the National Crime Victim Law Institute, the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the National Sexual Violence Resource Center, and the Victim Rights Law Center. Those measures will help safeguard the victims' identity and protect them from additional harm and re-victimization during the trial, the brief argues.

“The victims will provide information that is critical to this case,” said Mai Fernandez, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime. “For the criminal justice process to succeed, victims must be able to testify without fearing the personal exposure and embarrassment that media coverage can bring,” she said. “This Court should send a strong message to other victims that, when they testify in a criminal trial, they will be treated with fairness, dignity and respect.”

Delilah Rumburg, CEO of the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape, noted that sex offenders intentionally perpetrate their crimes in private. “Victims bravely come forward to report sexual assault, and they act in the best interest of public safety by cooperating with authorities,” said Rumburg. “In the same spirit of public safety, we need to afford protections to victims so that they can participate in the prosecution of serial criminals like sex offenders,” she said. “Victims are the only ones who can identify offenders and report the crime.”

“Victims of crime should not be required to suffer a re-victimization by sacrificing their fundamental right to privacy in order to exercise their fundamental right to access courts,” said Meg Garvin, Executive Director of the National Crime Victim Law Institute and Clinical

Professor at Lewis & Clark Law School. “The remedy in this case is simple—allow the victims to continue through trial under pseudonym.”

Asserting a compelling public interest in protecting crime victims, the brief cites several cases when courts protected victims’ fundamental rights to privacy without violating the defendant’s right to a public trial. Courts have excluded spectators to protect the victims’ right to privacy while testifying about sensitive and personal details of the crime. Arguing further, the brief urges the court to consider that without such protections in place it may violate the victims’ right to access the courts if they decide not to report the crime to avoid revealing their identities.

A copy of the brief, filed at the Centre County Courthouse in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, is available [here](#).

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The [National Center for Victims of Crime](#), established in 1985, is the nation’s leading resource and advocacy organization for crime victims and those who serve them. For more than 25 years, the National Center has led this nation's struggle to provide crime victims with the rights, protections, and services they need to rebuild their lives.

The [Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape](#) is the oldest state anti-sexual violence coalition in the U.S. The organization represents 51 sexual assault centers that serve the state’s 67 counties. Each year these centers provide confidential services, at no charge, to more than 30,000 men, women and children affected by sexual abuse.

Founded in 1998, the [National Crime Victim Law Institute](#) is a national resource for crime victim lawyers and victims to support the assertion and enforcement of victims’ rights in criminal and civil processes. NCVLI continues to be the only national organization whose mission is focused on enforcement of victims’ rights in the courts.

The [Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#) (PCADV) is a private nonprofit organization working at the state and national levels to eliminate domestic violence, secure justice for victims, enhance safety for families and communities, and create lasting systems and social change.

Founded by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape in 2000, the [National Sexual Violence Resource Center](#) identifies, develops and disseminates resources regarding all aspects of sexual violence prevention and intervention.

The [Victim Rights Law Center](#) was founded as the first law center in the nation dedicated solely to serving the legal needs of sexual assault victim. The Law Center is the leader in representing sexual assault victims’ legal rights within the civil context.