

# The Bakersfield Californian

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## OUR VIEW

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Saturday, Apr 27 2013 11:00 PM

### Symbolic? Perhaps, but victims' rights deserve our attention

By The Bakersfield Californian

For more than three decades, advocates for crime victims' rights have been attempting to secure one of the most difficult of all legislative changes: an amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

In what is likely a purely symbolic gesture, Rep. Jim Costa, D-Fresno, this week joined Republican Reps. Trent Franks of Arizona and Ed Royce of California in reintroducing a victims' rights amendment that would become part of the Constitution. "Only a constitutional amendment will begin to change the culture that treats crime victims with less than fairness, dignity and respect to which they are entitled," Costa and the other members of Congress wrote.

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As noble an issue as this may be, constitutional amendments are extraordinarily difficult to secure. An amendment must first win two-thirds' support in both the House and Senate, then must be ratified by 75 percent of the states. Another thorny obstacle is that many states, including California, already have victims' rights laws on the books, and federal lawmakers are reticent to change the Constitution when legislation that achieves the same objective can be enacted on the state level.

California's law, commonly called Marsy's Law, contains many of the provisions of the national proposal, including specifying that crime victims have the right to notice of public

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### WHAT DO YOU THINK?

Who do you support to succeed Sen. Michael Rubio to represent the 16th state senate district. Rubio resigned to take a position with Chevron.

Andy Vidak, Republican

proceedings related to the offense, as well as the right to be heard in various proceedings.

The proposed amendment's greatest value might be in keeping the issue of victims' rights out front in the public consciousness. Legislative redundancy, however, should not be a hindrance to codifying those rights in the Constitution, unlikely as it might be.

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Newly comprised city panel in a chicken reversal (6)

Despite passionate pleas from pro-poultry partisans, a proposal to allow Bakersfield residents to keep chickens in their urban neighborhoods didn't fly Monday.



Senate candidate zigzags through radio interview (5)

Francisco Ramirez, 16th Senate District candidate, told Fresno radio talk show host Ray Appleton Wednesday that he's running as a Democrat because most of the voters in the district are Democrats.

Supervisors approve Arvin-area solar project (3)

Kern County supervisors on Tuesday approved the conversion of 265 acres of farmland three miles southwest of Arvin into a 20-megawatt solar power project.



SHERRY DAVIS: Saying goodbye to dear canine companions (3)

A few weeks ago some very dear friends of mine said their last goodbyes to their beloved dog. After the news came, I hung up the phone with that sick ache in my chest that any of us who has ever loved and lost a pet knows only too well.