

N.J. wisely expands Joan's Law

Last Friday, I received a phone call from Governor's Christie's office at a few minutes after 1 p.m., to let me know that Joan's Bill A373/S607 was signed into law. Now we have Joan's Law in New Jersey that considers all minors and lessens the pain of victim's families. Joan's Law requires life imprisonment with no parole for murder in conjunction with a sexual offense against a minor under 18. The 1997 version of Joan's Law had only included crimes against children under 14.

Looking at the whole picture, it is evident that this victory for society could only happen if a movement of people were involved. My heart and thanks goes out to each person involved in the seven-year journey. This included my two sons, friends, all the legislators and every person who rooted for "Joan's Bill" with their calls, emails and letters. By standing up together we showed what hope is all about.

On a last note, I would like to share something that resonated throughout the journey that made me think of Joan. It has to do with the number 7. Joan was born on Sept. 7, and she was 7 years old when she passed on. The bill's numbers were A373 and S607, the signing was in the year 2017 and it took seven years for the bill to become law. In continuing with the symbolism of this number, a mobile made up of seven colored disks was hung in my home on the day of the signing. Of course, it includes green and orange, Joan's favorite colors and is



AP PHOTO

Joan D'Alessandro

a reminder of her hopeful legacy that makes it a safer and better world for all of us.

Rosemarie L. D'Alessandro
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