

## **Victim Impact Statements—Do they make a difference?**

**A collaboration of the University of Minnesota and WATCH  
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### **Selected quotes from judges and advocates interviewed for the study**

And people come and they think the courtroom is going to be a therapeutic place, and it's the exact opposite of anything like that. It's not going to bring them peace or comfort.

Fourth Judicial District Judge

But recognizing the closure aspect of it [the victim impact statement] for victims I think is important. I do. So I have kind of come full circle with it; I think it's a good thing.

Fourth Judicial District Judge

If the sentencing guidelines call for a probationary sentence, then whatever probationary conditions are imposed could be impacted by what the victim states, especially in regards to no-contact orders. Anger management, chemical dependency issues--you sort of need that information from the victim because they are the ones who know.

Fourth Judicial District Judge

A lot of people won't come to pre-trials, because even if they are there to say, "I want him hung by his nails," a defendant often will look at that as "Oh, she loves me. She is here. And she is only saying that because that advocate makes her." We make them say that, according to the defendants.

Victim advocate

So by her being very verbal, and she did a great job, but it backfired. It made them think that she was psychologically unstable because she elaborated about how stressful it was and that she had PTSD and this happened and that. And they just saw her as someone who just needed something the court couldn't give.

Victim advocate

Victims really appreciate it if the judge acknowledges that it was difficult to say what they say, that they were glad that they survived. "I am glad that you are here today" doesn't just mean "I am glad that you are here today"; it means that you are glad that you are breathing and that you are upright.

Victim advocate