

# WHY OHIO NEEDS AN ADDRESS CONFIDENTIALITY PROGRAM



## Katie's Story By A Stalking Survivor

My name is Katie. Domestic violence entered my life at birth. Stalking and sexual assault entered it in college. Growing up, my father talked about the escape of his mother, his two sisters, and himself from my grandfather, who beat them on a regular basis. They escaped with the help of my grandmother's brother, who ended up raising my dad.

In college, I became a victim of stalking before there were any stalking laws. Unknown to me, a stranger followed me on a city bus from my second floor apartment to the college I was attending. He broke into my locked mailbox in the apartment building to get my name. He phoned me in the middle of the night, used my first name, and told me that he was downstairs in my building. I called police, but they were unable to find anyone downstairs or around the building outside.

Two nights later, it was storming. When the lights went out in my apartment, I looked through the peephole of the front door to see if the electricity was also out in the hallway, and therefore for the entire building. That's when I felt the doorknob turn. Before I could react, a flashlight was shining in my eyes, and a gun was against my head. I was forced to walk in front of the intruder, out of the apartment building.

Unbelievably, I had two thoughts as we were leaving the building. The first was that I wouldn't be able to finish the term paper that was due in class on Monday. The second was that this would probably be my last night on Earth. I was surprised, though, that a feeling of peace came over me, and I remained alert, paying attention to details, in case I got a chance to identify the perpetrator.

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## House Bill 391

House Bill 391 introduced by State Representative Kathleen Chandler will create Ohio's Address Confidentiality Program in the Ohio Secretary of State's Office.

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There are two parts to this ordeal that I consider the scariest. The first was the loaded revolver held against my head, which was cocked when I resisted doing what the offender demanded. I realized that the gun could have fired accidentally. The second was hearing the detective tell me that the offender had been watching me for weeks. The detective said that the night of the break-in, the offender first broke into an apartment downstairs only to steal a flashlight. I was told that he next broke into the maintenance room, where he turned off the power for the building and stole the pass keys before forcing his way through my front door.

He was arrested attempting to break into another residence days later. Although it had been difficult to see the offender's face the night I was attacked, I was able to identify him in a photo line-up. He was indicted with five first-degree felonies, and sentenced to 7-25 years in prison. Despite my letters to the parole board, he was released from prison after seven years. During the time that he was incarcerated, I had graduated from college, moved to another city, gotten married (changing my name), and had an unlisted phone number.

The week that the perpetrator was released, I received the first of many heavy-breathing phone calls. I made numerous calls to his parole officer, who threatened to require the offender to take a polygraph if the calls didn't stop, since this was before Caller-ID existed. The calls stopped. Shortly thereafter, the offender was sent back to prison on weapons charges. He was convicted of Carrying a Concealed Weapon and Weapons under Disability, because as a convicted felon, he was not allowed to be in possession of a firearm. He served another 15 years. After he was released from prison the second time, he was placed on electronic monitoring for stalking another victim.

During those fifteen years, I educated myself on how to hide from a dangerous person determined to find me, as he'd threatened to do. Unfortunately through, home addresses are required on certain public records, and the internet makes it almost impossible to avoid being found. I realized that this is the situation for many domestic violence, stalking, and sexual assault victims.

However, something positive came from the internet about a year before the second release. I read an article about the first Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) in the United States, which began in the state of Washington in 1991. An ACP is a confidential mail-forwarding system that provides a substitute address that a victim can use instead of a home, work, or school address, and that government agencies are required to accept.

Today, there are 37 states that have Address Confidentiality Programs. Of those, 19 are administered by the Secretary of State, 11 are administered by the Attorney General, and 7 are administered by various other entities, such as non-profit agencies. On December 8, 2009, Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner announced the introduction of House Bill 391 that would provide for an ACP housed at the Ohio Secretary of State's office. Representative Kathleen Chandler is the bill's sponsor.

House Bill 391 has been passed by the Ohio House and is now pending in the Ohio Senate. Please contact your State Senator and urge his or her support for the Address Confidentiality Bill.

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### **Resources:**

Washington State  
Address Confidentiality Program (ACP)  
[www.sos.wa.gov/acp/Default.aspx](http://www.sos.wa.gov/acp/Default.aspx)

The National Center for Victims of Crime  
[www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

Ohio House of Representatives  
[www.house.state.oh.us](http://www.house.state.oh.us)

ACTION OHIO Coalition For Battered Women  
[www.actionohio.org](http://www.actionohio.org)