



ERIK NASARENKO District Attorney

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Senate Bill 538: E-Filing of Domestic and Gun Violence Restraining Orders

VENTURA, California – District Attorney Erik Nasarenko announced today his support for SB 538, introduced by California State Senator Susan Rubio (22nd District), which strengthens protections for survivors of domestic violence by requiring California’s Superior Courts to allow parties to electronically file for Domestic Violence Restraining Orders (DVROs) and Gun Violence Restraining Orders (GVROs).

The bill seeks to codify and standardize recent innovations. Some California courts were able to shift away from in-person filings and appearances and instead implement remote filing and video or telephonic appearances to reduce COVID-19 transmission risks.

In May 2020, the Ventura County Superior Court successfully implemented electronic filing and appearances for restraining orders. A process is in place that allows a victim to submit a restraining order petition and appear remotely via computer or mobile device from the Ventura County Family Justice Center, and other locations, instead of the courthouse. SB 538 would provide victims in any jurisdiction in the state with similar e-filing and remote appearance options.

“It has become clear that the current e-filing process implemented by the Ventura County Superior Court in restraining order matters is a convenient and trauma-informed approach to the delivery of this service to the victims we serve. Leaving an abusive partner puts victims in potentially life-threatening danger. The intensity of domestic violence may escalate, and the risk of domestic violence homicide becomes highest during a period of separation. Allowing the victim/petitioner to obtain a restraining order at a facility like the Family Justice Center, and avoid being compelled to come in contact with the abuser/respondent, allows the victim more time to plan and connect with resources safely and could

ultimately be life-saving. It also prevents the highly emotional, and at times, physical confrontations that occur in and outside of the courthouse during the restraining order hearing process. SB 538 will not only ensure that these innovations continue after COVID-19, but will now be an option for victims throughout California,” said District Attorney Nasarenko.

If enacted, SB 538 will require courts to implement e-filing and remote appearances in DVRO and GVRO matters by July 1, 2023. The bill is currently under consideration in the State Assembly Committee on Appropriations.

The Ventura County Family Justice Center is located at 3170 Loma Vista Road in Ventura. During business hours, Monday-Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., requests for services and information are available in person, by telephone (805) 652-7655, by text (805) 947-7981, and by email to vcfjc.coop@ventura.org.

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The Ventura County District Attorney’s Office is the public prosecutor for the county’s 850,000 residents. The office employs approximately 280 employees including attorneys, investigators, victim advocates, and professional support staff who strive to seek justice, ensure public safety, and protect the rights of crime victims.