

Move on to extend statute of limitations for rape

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REPUBLICAN-AMERICAN

HARTFORD — A proposed change in the statute of limitations for rape is being revived in the legislature.

The change would permit prosecutions no matter how many years have passed since a sexual assault if DNA evidence matches a rapist to the crime at a later date.

The original legislation got caught up in an unrelated dispute in the closing days of the regular legislative session and died with many other bills.

The inability of Waterbury police to charge a suspect linked by DNA to a 1993 rape inspired the legislation's introduction this year.

The legislature now has a second chance to change the statute of limitations in rape cases in special session. Lawmakers are meeting now to enact a new state budget and related bills.

Gov. M. Jodi Rell says one of the budget-related bills will incorporate the legislation to waive the 20-year statute of limitations for sexual assault crimes.

Rell said she and legislative leaders negotiated the revision in criminal law in the final budget talks.

"Everyone agreed to it so I think everybody is happy," said

Rep. Michael P. Lawlor, D-East Haven, House chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

The change would waive the time limit on prosecutions if the perpetrator is identified by DNA collected at the time of the rape, and if the victim reported the rape to police or state prosecutors within five years.



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The statute of limitation stopped Waterbury police from filing charges against a suspect in the rape of Donna Palomba, a well-known businesswoman who was sexually assaulted in her family's home in 1993.

Palomba came forward earlier this year and publicly identified herself. She expressed disappointment when the legis-

lation to change the statute of limitations got caught in the legislative crush.

Earlier this year, police linked family friend John Regan to the rape through a DNA sample taken following his 2004 arrest for trying to force himself sexually on co-worker.

It matched the DNA in Palomba's rape kit. However, police were only able to charge Regan with kidnapping because the statute of limitations had expired for sexual assault charges.

Regan later pleaded guilty to that offense and other charges relating to a 2004 stalking case. He additionally pleaded guilty in New York state to trying to snatch a teenage girl from a high school parking lot in Sarasota Springs.

Regan received a 12-year sentence in New York and a 15-year sentence in Connecticut.

The House of Representatives approved a two-year, \$36 billion budget early Saturday morning. It also passed two other budget-related bills, but not the one that changes the statute of limitations for rape prosecutions.

House members will return later to vote on the remaining bills. A date wasn't set Saturday. The current fiscal year ends on June 30. The Senate scheduled a budget vote for Monday.