



State of South Carolina

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Governor's Budget to Include \$2.2 Million for CDV Prosecution **BUDGET FUNDS ATTORNEY GENERAL'S PROPOSAL** **FOR ADDITIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROSECUTORS**

Columbia, S.C. – December 22, 2005 – In continuing his administration's efforts to make South Carolina safer for women and families, Governor Mark Sanford today previewed an Executive Budget recommendation for \$2.2 million for an additional criminal domestic violence prosecutor in each of South Carolina's 46 counties. The proposal was offered earlier this year by Attorney General Henry McMaster, part of his office's ongoing efforts to fight domestic violence in South Carolina. The governor has proposed that the funding go to the S.C. Prosecution Coordination Commission, allowing each county to hire a deputy solicitor to assist with criminal domestic violence prosecution, and to set up centralized courts to handle criminal domestic violence cases.

"Safety in one's own home is one of the most fundamental components of quality of life, and sadly it's something far too many women and families in South Carolina can't take for granted," Gov. Sanford said. "Whether it's with additional resources like this for law enforcement or stronger domestic violence laws, we're going to keep working to change South Carolina's dismal domestic violence rankings, and keep sending a clear message that violence in the home won't be tolerated any longer."

"In just under two years, our pro-bono domestic violence prosecutor program has demonstrated that trained and experienced prosecutors in magistrate courts are the missing link in combating our state's number one crime problem," said McMaster. "By including our proposal as a priority in his executive budget, Governor Sanford has made eradicating this vicious cycle of domestic violence one step closer to reality."

This budget proposal is a continuation of Gov. Sanford's commitment to addressing the problem of domestic violence in our state. Gov. Sanford signed legislation in August of 2003 that upped the criminal status for attempted assaults and imposed mandatory minimum sentences for repeat offenders. Gov. Sanford and Department of Social Services Director Kim Aydlette have also worked with victims' advocates to establish criminal domestic violence fatality review teams through a task force created in a 2004-05 budget proviso. Earlier this year, the governor signed a bill that further toughened penalties for domestic violence first, second and third offenses, requires judges to receive continuing legal education on domestic violence issues, and lengthened the time frame for expunging a criminal domestic violence conviction. He has also signed legislation to ensure unemployment benefits will be paid to workers who leave their jobs because they are fleeing domestic abuse.

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