



NEWS RELEASE: For Immediate Release. California Governor Signs Child Victims Act, Paving Justice Path for Survivors of Sexual Abuse Starting January 1, 2020

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Child Abuse Survivor Kristy Johnson and her Attorneys Speak Out About Recently Signed Assembly Bill 218

New California law opens legal window to hold institutions accountable for protecting sexual predators at the expense of children

(Los Angeles, California – October 15, 2019) Sunday Evening, October 13, Governor Gavin Newsom signed Assembly Bill 218, the California Child Victims Act, allowing a three-year window, starting January 1, 2020, for sexual abuse survivors to bring lawsuits against perpetrators and institutions that protected these perpetrators, even if the cases were previously barred by the statute of limitations.

This law is an important step toward healing for survivors like Kristy Johnson, who was sexually abused first in Utah and then in California (from roughly age 9 to age 18). Under Utah law, she was only able to sue her perpetrator and not the institution that protected him. The new California law now gives Kristy the chance to address institutional wrongs committed in California and will likely lead to better protections for future children in the state.

“I was repeatedly raped as a young child by a lifetime employee and priesthood holder of the Mormon Church, first in Utah, and then in California,” said Kristy Johnson. “This new law now allows me to finally seek justice against the institution that protected and harbored the Priesthood predator who committed so many evil acts against me and my sisters.”

Johnson’s story is documented in [“No Crime in Sin”](#), which shines a spotlight on policies and culture that too often protect sexual predators and not innocent children. “This is an historic day in California for survivors of sexual abuse, whether it happened in the Mormon Church, the Catholic Church or elsewhere,” added Johnson. The Mormon Church is officially known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints and is headquartered in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Attorney Craig Vernon of James, Vernon & Weeks, P.A. represented Johnson in the Utah case and applauds the wisdom of California lawmakers in holding institutions accountable for

protecting sexual predators. “Kristy and other survivors of sexual abuse within the Mormon community are victims of Church policy and culture, which often treat crimes against children as matters of sin to be dealt with by Mormon Bishops instead of crimes to be dealt with by police,” said Vernon. “This new law can be a catalyst for changes in policy and culture that lead to better protections for children in the future.”

Vernon and his law partner Leander James have extensive experience representing survivors of sexual abuse by Catholic clergy and other institutions across the country. Vernon and James are working with California law firm Donahoo & Associates, PC to pursue justice for Kristy Johnson and other California survivors. “This new law is about protecting children,” notes William E. Donahoo. “While there may be legal action against institutions like the Catholic Church, the Boy Scouts of America, or the Mormon Church, that action is not anti-religion. To the contrary, it ‘cuts out the cancer’ that is child sexual abuse from organizations that otherwise do good in this world.”

There is an opportunity for some measure of justice for child abuse survivors who come forward. “We want survivors to know that it is not their fault or shame and that they deserve justice,” said James. “The door to justice opens in January 2020 but it closes three years later. When you are ready to walk through that door, we can help in a confidential and respectful manner.”

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FOR MEDIA ONLY: For interviews with Kristy Johnson, or any of the attorneys, please see contact information at the beginning.