



Iowa General Assembly

2004 Legal Updates

Legislative Services Agency – Legal Services Division

<http://www.legis.state.ia.us>

Purpose. *Legal update briefings are prepared by the nonpartisan Legal Services Division of the Legislative Services Agency. A legal update briefing is intended to inform legislators, legislative staff, and other persons interested in legislative matters of recent court decisions, Attorney General Opinions, regulatory actions, federal actions, and other occurrences of a legal nature that may be pertinent to the General Assembly's consideration of a topic. Although a briefing may identify issues for consideration by the General Assembly, a briefing should not be interpreted as advocating any particular course of action.*

VICTIM IMPACT STATEMENTS

Filed by the Iowa Supreme Court
July 21, 2004

State of Iowa v. Robert Benjamin Matheson

<http://www.judicial.state.ia.us/supreme/opinions/20040721/02-1743.asp>

Overview. The Iowa Supreme Court held that a victim impact statement for a crime committed in another state shall not be admitted into evidence at a sentencing hearing in this state.

Factual Background. The defendant had developed work-related relationships with three different female coworkers in this case in order to gain their trust. The defendant then met the coworkers individually after hours at their place of employment and would suddenly grab and subdue the coworkers by binding their arms or legs. The defendant then took photographs of each coworker while each was subdued.

Procedural Background. The defendant pled guilty to false imprisonment and burglary in the second degree. At the sentencing hearing, the state offered into evidence victim impact statements for similar crimes committed by the defendant in Illinois. The court admitted the victim impact statements from Illinois over the objection of the defendant.

Analysis. The Iowa Supreme Court held that the authority to submit victim impact statements is “wholly statutory.” The Court concluded the definition of “victim” only includes victims who are affected by a crime committed in this state. Thus, a victim impact statement for a crime in another state is not admissible at a sentencing hearing in this state.

Conclusion. The Iowa Supreme Court remanded the case back to the district court for a new sentencing hearing before a judge who had not read the victim impact statements from Illinois.

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