

# SC Law To Combat Rape And Violence Against Women Is Adopted By Council

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A law to help police and citizens combat rape and other crimes of violence against women was adopted Tuesday by the Santa Cruz City Council.

The action was in response to an initiative petition signed by 7,747 persons. A random sampling of the signatures in conformance with the state Election Code projected that at least 5,562 of the signatures were the validated signatures of registered city voters.

Under the Election Code, the City Council had the choice of adopting the proposed legislation or putting the proposal to the voters in the Nov. 3 election.

The City Council's failure to act on another initiative petition that calls for an end to U. S. military intervention in El Salvador appears this morning to be headed to the court for a final decision. (See separate story on page 13).

The council response to the petition circulated by Community United Against Rape and Battery was expected, for even during the petition drive several councilmen were asking how anyone could ignore concerns about rape and violence.

The council action was an adoption of the law for introduction, with final passage scheduled for a subsequent council meeting.

The law mandates the establishment of a Commission for the Prevention of Violence Against Women, a seven-member body to be appointed by the City Council. The commission will develop a comprehensive plan for preventing rape and violence, make recommendations on relevant issues to the City Council, and review citizen complaints and recommendations about the city Police Department service to women who have been raped or battered.

The comprehensive plan to prevent rape and violence must be completed within a year, and will include education programs for the police, religious and community groups, schools and the like.

The law also establishes that the prevention of rape and domestic violence shall be one of the highest priorities in the city.

Mardi Wormhoudt, a coordinator of the CURB petition drive and an announced candidate for election in November to the City Council, said she was overjoyed by the motion by Councilman Larry Edler and the second by Spiro Mellis to pass the measure. She said, "Old people and young, women and men, people in every neighborhood of the city took time to listen to us, question and finally to sign the petition urging you to take strong steps called for in this ordinance to end the alarming epidemic of rape and domestic brutality that exists within our community and to ensure that women who have been beaten or raped will receive the very best police and community services that we can offer."

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CURB issued a press release today in which Tamy Matanky, a spokesman, said: "We are elated and proud that our efforts have been so successful. Women everywhere will be celebrating this victory."

Councilman Bruce Van Allen Tuesday called it "a victory for every woman in Santa Cruz." Van Allen also expressed amazement that the council had adopted the measure rather than set it for an election. His apparent reference was that the City Council majority recently refused to grant funds to an organization called Women Against Rape.

Mayor Joseph Ghio cast the dissenting vote, saying the legislation raises budgetary questions, is redundant and that the police deal with these crimes.

But led by Mellis and Edler, a council majority that included Van Allen and Bert Muhly introduced the law by a 4 to 1 vote. Absent were Councilmen John Mahaney and Micahel Rotkin.