http://newiprogressive.com/images/stories/S5/boy-in-doc-s5.jpg 

Republicans use a little known time limit clause on John Doe probes included in "Corrupt Politician Protection Act" to protect Gov. Walker as excuse to end probe of abuse and exploitation of children at state correctional facilities.

MADISON - The state John Doe probe of abuse and exploitation of children at the Department of Corrections' Lincoln Hills School for Boys/Copper Lake School for Girls ended Monday under a law Gov. Scott Walker signed last year limiting how such investigations can be conducted.

The state Department of Justice began its investigation in January 2015, following media reports that since February 2012, state officials at the highest levels have known of attacks and sexual assaults at Lincoln Hills School for Boys. The cover-up continued with state officials neither contacting or fully disclosing the details to county officials, family members of victims and even law enforcement.

In October, the investigation expanded as a John Doe probe before Lincoln County Circuit Judge Robert Russell. Under the John Doe law, prosecutors can compel people to testify and produce documents.

That John Doe investigation opened a day before Walker signed a bill termed by Democrats as the "Corrupt Politician Protection Act" tightly limiting how such probes can be conducted. This legislation prohibits the use of John Doe probes to investigate violations of laws which restrict political activities. The change to the John Doe law was a response to an investigation of the Republican governor's campaign by Democratic District Attorney John Chisholm of Milwaukee County.

However, the law also places arbitrary time limits on John Doe probes in other types of cases. This time limit is forcing the end of the the Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake probe. The GOP-led changes also raised unnecessary hurdles to efforts to continue probes, which have now made it

harder to investigate the apparent abuse of children at the schools.



“We’ve all been appalled by the stories we’ve heard about the horrifying criminal abuse and neglect of children who were ordered to live at the Lincoln Hills and Copper Lake facilities. Media have reported, and courts have documented, instances of children who were subjected to neglect, abuse, strangulation, suffocation and other acts of physical brutality,” said Rep. Dana Wachs (D-Eau Claire), ranking Democrat on the Assembly Committee on Judiciary. “These charges were serious enough to warrant not just a John Doe probe by the state, but a full federal investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.”

“Just last fall, Governor Walker signed into law legislation which all but eliminated the use of John Doe investigations in the state,” added Wachs. “He did this because investigators had alleged that there had been numerous violations of campaign finance laws surrounding his political campaigns. Now, we see that children being terribly abused at state facilities are just collateral damage from the efforts of the Governor and Republicans in the Legislature to block investigations into their questionable campaign finance practices.”