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Bill removing statute of limitations in child sexual abuse cases passes Legislature

By Katie McKellar, Deseret News

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Rep. Angela Romero, D-Salt Lake City, and Deondra Brown watch as HB 277 passes the Utah House of Representatives Monday, March 2, 2015, at the state Capitol.

Scott G. Winterton, Deseret News

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Summary

The Utah Legislature passed a bill Wednesday that would eliminate the statute of limitations for lawsuits against perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

SALT LAKE CITY — The Utah Legislature passed a bill Wednesday that eliminates the statute of limitations for lawsuits against perpetrators of child sexual abuse.

Deondra Brown, co-founder of the nonprofit Foundation for Survivors of Abuse, watched from the Senate gallery as lawmakers engaged in a final debate before voting to pass HB277 and sending it to Gov. Gary Herbert for his signature.

“On behalf of victims across the state of Utah, we’re excited to know that we can kind of breathe, take our time in healing, and come forward and tackle that big legal case when and if we are every ready,” Brown said.

Brown has followed the progress of HB277 and testified in favor of the bill at committee meetings throughout the legislative process. Three Brown sisters, members of the 5 Browns piano quintet, were molested by their father, Keith Brown, as children. The sisters sought criminal charges in 2010 against their father, who had also been their professional manager.

Keith Brown was sentenced in March 2011 to 10 years to life for sodomy on a child, a first-degree felony, and one to 15 years each on two counts of sex abuse of a child, a second-degree felony. The crimes occurred when the girls were 13 years old or younger.

Current Utah law limits civil actions to four years after a victim’s 18th birthday. HB277 would remove those limitations and allow victims time to heal and muster the courage and maturity to take civil action and hold their abusers accountable, said bill sponsor Rep. Ken Ivory, R-West Jordan.

“Someone that victimizes a child should never be able to

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