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Biden, Collins Resolution Designates January as National Stalking Awareness Month

Washington, DC – U.S. Senators Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (D-DE) and Susan Collins (R-ME) introduced a resolution designating January as National Stalking Awareness Month. This is the fifth consecutive year the Senate has considered the resolution, which applauds the efforts of policymakers, law enforcement officers, victim service providers, and other groups that currently promote stalking awareness.

“Stalking is not a one-time occurrence; this is a crime that leaves its victim fearful 24 hours a day, seven days a week. No place – not even home – is safe if a stalker knows where the victim lives. Victims spend their days and nights looking over their shoulder, often changing jobs, relocating their homes, and even changing their appearance to escape the stalker,” said Sen. Biden, author of the landmark Violence Against Women Act. In many instances, victims usually know their stalkers and 81 percent of women victims are also physically assaulted by their stalker. “January is National Stalking Awareness Month – the perfect opportunity for parents, lawmakers and community leaders to carefully review state and local laws on stalking and insist that laws keep pace with technology and protect victims.”

“I am pleased to join my colleague, Senator Biden, in introducing a Resolution marking January as National Stalking Awareness Month,” said Sen. Collins. “In my home state of Maine, domestic violence is a widespread problem. Many experts have concluded that there is a strong connection between stalking and violence toward women. Efforts, such as National Stalking Awareness Month, help raise awareness about this serious and potentially deadly crime.”

According to the National Center for Victims of Crime and the Stalking Resource Center, approximately 1 million women and 400,000 men are victims of stalking in this country annually. 1 in 12 women and 1 in 45 men will be stalked at some point in their lives, as well as close to 13 percent of female college students. Moreover, today’s technology has made stalking much easier, as stalkers can design websites to encourage others to monitor or harm their victim, install spyware on their victim’s computer or plant global positioning systems (GPS) in their victim’s car to track their victim’s travels. Other technologies, including social networking websites, such as Facebook and MySpace, cell phones with surveillance devices meant for parents monitoring their children, and running shoes implanted with GPS devices, may provide additional opportunities for stalkers to harm their victims. While all fifty states have laws against stalking, only one-third of states have included language relating to stalking via electronic means.

“Stalking is a serious and potentially lethal crime,” said Mary Lou Leary, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime. “We thank Senators Biden and Collins for introducing this National Stalking Awareness Month resolution, which will raise awareness about the impact of stalking on more than 1.4 million Americans each year.”

“We can – and we must – do more to ensure that stalking victims are not forced to live in constant fear and that stalkers are brought to justice,” added Sen. Biden.

For victim assistance, call the National Crime Victim Helpline at 1-800-FYI-CALL. Visit www.ncvc.org/src for a map of activities planned around the country for National Stalking Awareness Month and for more information.

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