

Congressman Garamendi Applauds Passage of Strong & Inclusive Violence Against Women Act

WASHINGTON, DC – Congressman John Garamendi (D-Fairfield, CA), a proud father of five daughters, [today voted to reauthorize and strengthen the Violence Against Women Act \(VAWA\) and send it to the President to be signed into law.](#)

Passed 19 years ago, this landmark legislation focused the resources, time, and energy of federal, state, and local law enforcement on the task of preventing and stopping domestic abuse, while providing victims of violence with critical services and assistance. The version passed today strengthens VAWA by extending the law's crucial protections to LGBT, Native American and immigrant victims, providing for more rape kits as well as a national registry of forensic evidence from sexual assault cases, strengthening criminal anti-trafficking statutes, providing for temporary housing for victims, and addressing domestic violence on American college campuses.

“Violence against any woman anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere,” Congressman Garamendi said. “No woman in America should feel unsafe living her daily life, including women on college campuses and women in Native American, immigrant, and LGBT communities. I’m glad we were able to secure the votes for a strong and inclusive Violence Against Women Act that leaves no victim of domestic abuse behind.”

Last Congress, the U.S. Senate passed a bipartisan reauthorization of VAWA, with key provisions strengthening the law, by a vote of 68 to 31. However, House Republican leadership refused to bring the bipartisan Senate bill to the floor and, over 500 days ago, VAWA was allowed to expire.

VAWA has improved the criminal justice system's ability to keep victims safe and hold perpetrators accountable. Based on this legislation, every state has enacted laws to make stalking a crime and strengthened criminal rape statutes. Since VAWA became law, the annual incidence of domestic violence has dropped more than 50 percent – and reporting of domestic violence has increased as much as 51 percent.

Garamendi added, “For much of American history, reporting domestic abuse and rape was stigmatized and prosecutions were rare, and women suffered silently for it. With today’s vote, I hope we have definitively turned the page and that all women and men alike are empowered to speak out against and condemn all forms of abuse

against women. Real men respect women, and just nations aggressively prosecute those who violate women. We must work together to ensure that no woman is a victim of rape or domestic abuse.”

VAWA has also successfully encouraged communities and law enforcement agencies to coordinate their responses to violence against women and provide effective, long-term support for victims.

While we’ve made progress over the years, there is still much work to do. One in four women has been the victim of severe physical domestic violence and one in five has been raped in their lifetime. This is unacceptable. We must continue to promote policies that work to put an end to domestic violence.

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