Victory Over Violence Action Kit

- Background Information: What’s at Stake
- How to Lobby Elected Officials
- Discussion Points on Ending Violence Against Women
- Contacts for DFA Regional Field Organizers
- Contacts for Organizations working to end violence against women

What’s at Stake:

2012 is a monumental year for American women. November’s election will determine if the GOP’s attack on women’s rights will extend to the executive branch. But re-electing the president will not guarantee protection of women’s rights.

This year, Congress is charged with reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act, a bipartisan bill drafted in the 1980s to help reverse the trend of domestic and sexual violence against women in the United States. In April, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) sponsored the most inclusive VAWA ever (S. 1925), extending the rights of undocumented immigrants, LGBTQ people, and Native American women when reporting abuse.

House Republicans responded with H.R. 4970, which specifically stripped the aforementioned groups of their newly proposed rights. In a country where a woman is assaulted or beaten every nine seconds, more than three women are murdered by an intimate partner each day, and one in three American women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetimes, to deny even one woman the full protection of the law would be gravely unjust.
How to Lobby Elected Officials in Person

Constituency Meetings
Too often people think of politics as something that happens one day every two or four years. Activists work hard to elect socially progressive, fiscally responsible government. *Our leaders need to know that we can give them support – or pressure – on any given day.* Even the best public officials need their constituent’s support and pressure to help them make the right decisions. If the grassroots do not engage elected officials, somebody else will – and that’s the scary part.

The Constituent vs. the Paid lobbyist
You don’t need to be a high-powered, big name, professional lobbyist to make an impact. *It is to your advantage that you are ‘just your average voter’ in their district.* By virtue of being a constituent (or by mobilizing constituents) you have a level of credibility that professional firms do not. No elected official can survive with a reputation for ignoring his/her constituents.

Goals of a constituent visit
1. Elected officials need to see the human face of the issues. The constituent is that face. Getting to know the legislator makes them more likely to meet with you in the future.
2. Press them to vote right on issues important to bettering society.
3. Make them accountable for votes they have made already.
Best Practices

**Do:**

1) **Speak from the heart.**

   - Tell your story. It will be the truest, most passionate thing the elected official hears all day. It is also the easiest for you to remember.

2) **Use the facts**

   - A small number (2-3) compelling facts will help you make your case. Make sure the facts have a credible source (i.e. not a random blog comment). Use statistics in your story only if you can bring a human face to the numbers. Keep the facts local or discuss the local implications.

3) **Ask for one simple thing**

   - Never leave without asking your public official to do something (e.g. vote for or against a bill). Whatever you need the legislator to do, make sure the request is clear and that you understand the response.
   - Lobbying for only one issue/action at a time will keep you focused and leave little room for the public official to evade a commitment.

4) **Prepare for the meeting**

   - The public official’s job is to know the issues at hand. Constituents come in to add to that official’s knowledge and to ask for a specific commitment. Know the official’s priorities, record, and major supporters. Know the local impact and costs of the issue.
## What Not to Do

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<thead>
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<th>DON’T:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1) Go on too long</strong></td>
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<td><strong>2) Include a laundry lists and irrelevant details</strong></td>
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<td><strong>3) Get the run-around</strong></td>
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<td><strong>4) Be unprofessional</strong></td>
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Sample Constituent Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions: make sure you get everyone’s name and where they’re from.
   a. Legislators will want to know that they’re only talking to their own constituents. Bringing too many outsiders shows lack of support.

2. Go over agenda and time check
   a. Go over the agenda so everyone knows what’s coming.
   b. Your time is valuable and so is your legislator’s. You should set a length of time for your meeting and stick to it. You’ll likely only get 15 minutes; 30 at most. Make it count.

3. Share your story, your neighborhood’s story
   a. Short, but powerful.

4. Deliver your facts and ask for one simple thing.

5. Ask for questions.
   a. Your legislator will ask questions. This shows that he or she has been listening, and that you know what you are talking about.

6. Set up a follow up time.
   a. If you can’t nail down a commitment from your legislator on your first ask, establish a solid, specific follow-up plan, and then actually follow-up.
Rallies

Organizing a mass demonstration can be a very effective way to increase pressure on your target. However a large rally is not always a feasible tactic and should not be taken lightly.

When should you host a rally?
The first step in deciding to host a rally is determining whether a rally is the best tactic to achieve your objectives. Here are some strengths and weaknesses of the rally:

A rally *may* be the right choice when:
- You’re looking to pressure a decision maker
- You want to bring attention to your cause or issue
- You have a clear message

A rally *may not* be the right choice when:
- You don’t have the ability to recruit enough people to fill up your location
- Your issue is technical and complex

Recruitment
Start by setting a goal for the number of attendees you want to have and work backwards. It’s a good idea to look at your timeline and set benchmarks for when you want to hit sub goals of your overall goal. It’s also important to keep in mind that you can expect almost half of the people who sign up to not actually attend for one reason or another. Therefore you should take your actual goal, double it and work towards achieving that many sign-ups.
With your goal in mind, you can begin reaching out to the local contacts that may have an interest in the issue. This includes:

- government officials,
- non-profits,
- issue advocacy groups,
- local political action committees,
- democratic caucuses,
- student groups
- local progressive blogs

Send an email to all the local contacts detailing information about your cause, why it is important, and how the rally will have an impact. (E.g. do you want to stop legislation? Pass legislation? Elect a candidate?) A few days after you have sent out emails, call everyone that you have not heard back from. Ask if they saw your email, then explain why they should participate and support your rally.

Your largest source for rally attendees will be members from the different local groups and organizations that you have been in contact with. Use social media:

- create a Facebook event
- post tweets about the rally
- ask your local contacts to do the same

In addition, consider running an ad in local newspapers and write a letter to the editor about your upcoming rally that will make a huge impact on this important issue that has been in the news.

**Logistics:**
Pick a location, date, and time. Pick a location that can accommodate your targeted number of participants, is easily
accessible, and is meaningful (e.g. if you want legislation passed, rally in front of the state legislature building).

- Be sure that your selected date does not interfere with any other major local or national events.
- Speak with police well in advance of your event to get a permit for your rally.
- Be sure to figure out the appropriate sound system for your space and a reliable power source.

**Speakers**
As part of your recruitment, you should think about the best speakers to have at your event. *Speakers should fit within your message and be short and to the point.* If there was a particularly helpful coalition group, you should consider reaching out to have a speaker from their group.

Speakers are also a great way to help draw more attendees to your event. Just be sure that you have an idea of what the speakers plan to say a head of time and that it stays within your message. Even the best speakers have a tendency to keep talking and talking. The best way to avoid a speech from going on too long is to have a agreed upon timeline beforehand and give the speaker signals when their time is about to expire.

**Press Outreach**
You should send a news advisory to all the local newspapers, TV stations, and any other media outlet that can give the rally media coverage 3-5 days before the rally.
Once you fax a news advisory to a media outlet, call to make sure the reporter sees the advisory and to pitch them the event. Try to relate the rally to a story that the reporter wrote. On the day of the rally, call your media outlets one last time to confirm and re-pitch the rally.

Creating Your Own Press
Regardless of whether or not you are able to get members of the media to attend your event, you should work to document the event yourself and create your own media. You should have assigned volunteers responsible for taking pictures, recording video of your rally and using social media to give live updates about your event to those who can’t attend. In addition to promoting these materials yourself, you can also send them to members of the media.

Maintaining the Momentum
You held a successful rally, you got great press coverage and the turnout was fantastic! Now what? Don’t let the momentum stop there!

Rallies are a great opportunity to gather petition signatures and pass out literature about your cause and or group. You should also have a way to record information from attendees so that you can continue to keep in touch with them and get them involved in
further actions. Unless your rally instantly achieves your policy goal, you should consider it as a step stone from which to build further actions and events.

**Lobbying By Phone, Email & Social Media**

When advocating for issues or legislation in email, over the phone, or on social media like Facebook or Twitter, use the same best practices you would for a face-to-face meeting.

Explore the variety of ways to contact your representatives

- Most elected officials are getting active on social media and often have Twitter accounts or Facebook pages - so you can mention them, tag them, retweet them, tweet at them or post on their walls to contact your elected officials
- Many elected officials have more than one office - when making calls you can call multiple offices to make sure you get your point across
- Keep in mind that when you call a member of Congress, you usually speak to a staffer (or leave a voicemail).

*Remember that the most effective form of contact is face-to-face, then phone, then social media, and then email.* People (especially elected officials) get a lot of email, so if you have limited time, focus on calls and visits rather than emails.
Sample Call to a Supportive Official:
Hi this is _______ - I'm a constituent from ______ and I want to thank you for your leadership in pushing for the Senate's version of VAWA (S 1925). It's so important to provide LBGTQ, immigrant and native women the protections that are in the Senate bill. So I am calling simply to voice my support for your stance on this legislation. Thank you.

Sample Call to an Unsupportive Official
Hi this is _______ and I'm a constituent from _______. I want to urge you to support the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (S 1925). Women's lives are at stake while VAWA is stalled in the House. What is your position on the Senate bill (S. 1925)?
[if not supportive or no position] What are your reservations or questions about the Senate bill?
[listen carefully, take notes]
Thank you for sharing your thoughts. The Violence Against Women Act is important to me because.....[fill in your personal story or reasons for support]
Victory Over Violence Discussion Points

- 1 in 3 women will be assaulted or raped during her lifetime. This is obscene and we’re not going to take it anymore.
- Everyday in the US, more than three women are murdered by an intimate partner.
- Domestic violence is the leading cause of injury to women—more than car accidents, muggings, and rapes combined.
- Domestic violence victims lose nearly 8 million days of paid work per year in the US alone—the equivalent of 32,000 full-time jobs.
- The costs of intimate partner violence in the US alone exceed $5.8 billion per year: $4.1 billion are for direct medical and health care services, while productivity losses account for nearly $1.8 billion.
- Reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act (S. 1925) is crucial to protect all women’s lives. Under the current act, Native Americans, undocumented immigrants, and LGBT people are not offered full protection from domestic/sexual violence and stalking.

For more information on the Violence Against Women Act please visit the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women VAWA Web site: 4vawa.org

Factsheet - Opposition to H.R. 4970

LGBTQ Provisions of S. 1925: Myth vs. Fact

Tribal Provisions of S. 1925: Myth vs. Fact

Immigration Provisions of S. 1925: Myth vs. Fact
Training Department
We offer trainings online and on-the-ground for grassroots organizers, candidates and campaign staff/volunteers. For more information about our upcoming trainings, please email Training@DemocracyForAmerica.com or call (802) 651-3217.

Regional Field Organizers
Our regional field organizers are here to support your activism. We can help you form a DFA group in your community and connect you with local DFA members who care about the issues you do, and who want to take action together.

If you live in the South, please contact:
Franco Caliz-Aguilar
(786)-443-7831
Democracy for America, Southern Field Organizer
fcaliz@democracyforamerica.com
@fcaliz on Twitter

If you live in the Midwest, please contact:
Karli Wallace
Democracy for America
kwallace@democracyforamerica.com

If you live in the West, please contact:
Tim Nicholas
(434)-409-2163
Democracy for America, Western Field Organizer
tnicholas@democracyforamerica.com

If you live in the East, please contact:
Max Stahl
(781)-540-9648
Democracy for America, Eastern Field Organizer
mstahl@democracyforamerica.com
The National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (NCDSV) designs, provides, and customizes training and consultation, influences policy, promotes collaboration and enhances diversity with the goal of ending domestic and sexual violence.

V-Day

V-Day is a global activist movement to end violence against women and girls. V-Day is a catalyst that promotes creative events to increase awareness, raise money, and revitalize the spirit of existing anti-violence organizations. V-Day generates broader attention for the fight to stop violence against women and girls, including rape, battery, incest, female genital mutilation (FGM), and sex slavery.

- One Billion Rising - [www.onebillionrising.org](http://www.onebillionrising.org)
Organizations working to end violence against women

Rape Abuse and Incest National Network - [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org)
info@rainn.org
Phone: 202-544-1034
Mailing address: 2000 L Street NW, Suite 406, Washington, DC 20036

National Alliance to End Sexual Violence - [www.endsexualviolence.org](http://www.endsexualviolence.org)
info@endsexualviolence.org
Mailing address: 1130 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 300, Washington, DC 20036

Phone: 202-543-5566
Mailing address: 2001 S Street NW, Suite 400, Washington, DC 20009

mainoffice@ncadv.org
Phone: 303-839-1852
Mailing address: One Broadway, Suite B210, Denver, CO 80203

National Sexual Violence Resource Center - [www.nsvrc.org](http://www.nsvrc.org)
Phone: 717-909-0710
Mailing address: 123 North Enola Drive, Enola, PA 17025

Abused Deaf Women’s Advocacy Services - [www.adwas.org](http://www.adwas.org)
adwas@adwas.org
Phone: (206) 922-7088
Mailing address: 8623 Roosevelt Way NE, Seattle WA 98115

Gay Men’s Domestic Violence Project - [www.gmdvp.org](http://www.gmdvp.org)
Client services: support@gmdvp.org
Education and Outreach: education@gmdvp.org
Phone: 617-354-6056
Mailing address: 955 Massachusetts Avenue, PMB 131, Cambridge, MA 02139

Break the Cycle - [www.breakthecycle.org](http://www.breakthecycle.org)
info@breakthecycle.org
Phone: 202.824.0707
Mailing address: P.O. Box 21034, Washington, DC 20009