



NEWS RELEASE
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Domestic and Sexual Violence Experts Hail Introduction of 'Violence Against Women Act' in Senate

A broad coalition of the nation's leading experts on domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking hailed today's introduction of the *Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)* in the United States Senate. Sponsored by Senators Joseph Biden (D-DE), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Arlen Specter (R-PA) along with co-sponsors Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Mike DeWine (R-OH), Herb Kohl (D-WI), Charles Grassley (R-IA), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI) and Charles Schumer (D-NY), the bill re-authorizes the landmark legislation that was first passed in 1994. It adds new components that enhance services for victims of sexual assault and improve programs addressing health, prevention and other essential issues. Bipartisan leaders in the House of Representatives are expected to introduce a House version of the *Violence Against Women Act* shortly.

In 1994, *VAWA* transformed the nation, improving the law enforcement response to violence against women and providing services to victims across the country. In 2000, Congress re-authorized *VAWA*, adding important services for immigrant, rural and older women, as well as women with disabilities. *VAWA* will expire in September if Congress does not re-authorize it.

"Since it was first enacted, *VAWA* has provided tremendous help to women, children and men facing violence. The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women is a broad, powerful coalition that is calling on Congress to make re-authorization of the *Violence Against Women Act* a priority this year. Americans are counting on lawmakers to continue successful programs and build on the success of the last ten years by making desperately needed improvements. We salute Senators Biden, Specter and Hatch for their commitment to eradicating domestic and sexual violence. We look forward to working with them on both reauthorization and on crucial additions to the current law," said Lisalyn Jacobs, Vice President of Government Relations for Legal Momentum, which coordinates the Task Force – a coalition of more than 2,000 organizations dedicated to ending violence against women.

The new Senate bill would enhance the civil and criminal justice response; improve services and outreach to victims; provide resources for sexual assault victims through rape crisis centers and state coalitions; help children and youth who experience or witness violence; address the needs of victims from communities of color; aid immigrant and tribal victims; and support prevention, health, housing and economic security programs designed to stop violence and help victims.

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NOTE:

For more information on the *Violence Against Women Act*, or to be connected to an expert on any aspect of the bill, contact Lisa Lederer, Family Violence Prevention Fund, 202/371-1999 or Cheryl O'Donnell, National Network to End Domestic Violence, 202/543-5566.