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## **House Passes Resolution on Crime Victims' Rights**

On April 23, the House approved, 407-0, a resolution (H. Res. 119) supporting the mission and goals of National Crime Victims' Rights Week in order to increase public awareness of the rights, needs, and concerns of victims and survivors of crime in the United States.

Sponsored by Rep. Jim Costa (D-CA), the resolution contains a number of findings, including:

- the collaborative efforts of criminal and juvenile justice professionals, victim service providers, public policy makers, allied professionals, and the Office for Victims of Crime and the Office on Violence Against Women within the Department of Justice have helped enhance public safety and victim awareness in various communities of all sizes across the United States;
- there are over 10,000 system-based and community-based victim assistance programs that provide greatly needed interventions, support, and justice system advocacy to crime victims and survivors, including 4,400 programs that receive Victims of Crime Act [P.L. 98-473] funding; and
- the theme of the 2007 National Crime Victims' Rights Week, called "Victims' Rights: Every Victim, Every Time," recognizes that all victims and survivors of crimes deserve to have victims' rights and access to victims' services, and recognizes the ongoing efforts of countless victim service providers, justice professionals, and allied professionals and

volunteers who selflessly dedicate their lives to helping victims and survivors of crimes to exercise their victims' rights and access important victim services.

Rep. Costa said, "Unfortunately, last year the FBI Uniform Crime Reports found that crime again is on the rise. Violent crime rose by 3.7 percent. Murders increased by 1.4 percent, and robberies were up by 10 percent. This means that victims suffered the indignation of crime and have significant losses that affect them physically, emotionally, and financially. Our [Crime Victims'] caucus and our Congress must recommit our energies to ensure that "every victim of every crime" has access to support and services. Therefore, we must talk to the millions of Americans who are victimized each year. We must recall that every violent crime has a victim and every victim has a story. We know about the teenage girl who leaves home for the first time to go to college, to be impacted by a rape; or the young mother who is beaten by her husband on a regular basis but fears leaving him because he has threatened to kill her kids and she has no money and no place to go. Every victim, every time."

"Too often, victims of crime are made to be victims a second time, this time as a result of our criminal justice system, the very system designed to protect them," said Rep. Steve Chabot (R-OH). He continued, "In 2004, 20 years after Congress enacted the Victims of Crime Act which authorized the Victims Assistance Fund, Congress enacted the Justice for All Act [P.L. 108-405]. This was another important victory for crime victims, as it extended a number of enforceable rights to crime victims, including the right to reasonably be heard at any public proceeding involving release, or plea or sentencing, the right to file a motion to reopen a plea, or a sentence in certain circumstances, and most importantly, the right to be treated with dignity and fairness and respect. Continued recognition and support of National Crime Victims' Week serves many purposes, including to remind us of what victims have suffered, to thank those individuals and organizations who have selflessly dedicated themselves to assisting victims, and to urge us all to rededicate ourselves to...advancing the cause of victims of crime."