

NEWS RELEASE
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Jewish Women International Lauds Introduction of 'Violence Against Women Act' in House of Representatives

Jewish Women International applauds Members of Congress for introducing a strong *Violence Against Women Act of 2005* in the House of Representatives yesterday (*VAWA* – H.R. 2876) and in the Senate last week (*VAWA* – S 1197). The new bills re-authorize the landmark legislation that was first passed in 1994, enhancing services for victims of sexual assault and improving programs that address health, prevention and other essential issues.

A new bill was introduced in the House of Representatives late yesterday by chief co-sponsors Representatives Mark Green (R-WI) and John Conyers (D-MI), and last week a Senate version was introduced by chief co-sponsors Senators Joseph Biden (D-DE), Arlen Specter (R-PA), and Orrin Hatch (R-UT). Both versions of the bill are also garnering tremendous bi-partisan support in both Congressional branches.

The *Violence Against Women Act* will expire in September if Congress does not re-authorize it. Enacted in 1994, the legislation improved the law enforcement response to violence against women and made many more services available to victims. In 2000, Congress re-authorized the law, adding services for rural, older and immigrant women, as well as those with disabilities.

“*VAWA* has done a tremendous amount to help victims of violence, but our work is not yet done,” said Lori Weinstein, Executive Director of Jewish Women International. “We urgently need Congress to re-authorize the legislation, continuing the programs that have worked while expanding the law into essential new areas. We salute the Senate and House leaders, Women’s Caucus leaders and their colleagues for their work to stop domestic and sexual violence. We look forward to working with them to strengthen and pass this legislation.”

The new House and Senate bills 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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