Leahy Calls on House to Pass Senate VAWA Bill before Adjourning for the Year

'Only way to reauthorize VAWA’ is for House to take up Senate bill

WASHINGTON (Thursday, December 20, 2012) – U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee Chairman Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), lead author of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, called on Thursday for House Republicans to do the right thing in the final days of the 112th Congress and pass the Senate-passed measure that protects all victims against domestic and sexual violence.

In a statement, Leahy noted that he has sought a bipartisan compromise with House Republicans on the key tribal provision in the Senate bill, which was coauthored by Sen. Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) and passed the Senate with 68 votes in April. Leahy has repeatedly stated over the last few weeks that legislation authored by Rep. Darrell Issa (R-Calif.) and Rep. Tom Cole (R-Okla.) could provide a reasonable, middle ground on tribal jurisdiction and ultimately a groundbreaking deal on VAWA between the two chambers. While no such compromise has materialized, Leahy said there is still time for the House to act.

“I appreciate that there have at last been some renewed discussions about this bill in the House of Representatives but that is not enough,” Leahy said. “The only way to reauthorize VAWA this year is for the House to take up and pass the Senate-passed bill. If the House Republican leadership refuses to do that in the final days of this Congress, it is a shame.”

He noted the tragic events like this week’s shooting in Colorado, in which a man just released from jail on domestic violence charges killed his ex-girlfriend, her sister, her sister’s husband and eventually himself, only underscore the need for Congress to focus on passing VAWA. If the House fails to act, Leahy vowed to continue to champion inclusive legislation that protects all victims next year and push Congress to act.

“We have seen enough violence,” Leahy said. “If we cannot get the Leahy-Crapo bill over the finish line this year, we will come back next year, and we will get it done. I look forward to other Senators joining us as we continue this vital effort.”

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Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
on The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act

December 20, 2012

I have been saying for weeks and months that we are overdue to pass into law the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, which the Senate approved in April with 68 bipartisan votes. I am disappointed that the House still has not picked up this bipartisan effort and that we are not getting the job done this year. I want everyone to know that I will be back next year, and we will get it done.

Just yesterday we were reminded again why this legislation is so important. In Colorado, a man just released from jail on domestic violence charges shot his way into a house, murdering his ex-girlfriend, and her sister, and her sister’s husband, before killing himself. We have seen enough horrific violence. It is past time to act.

The Leahy-Crapo bill would support the use of techniques proven to help identify high-risk cases and prevent domestic violence homicides. It will help us go further to prevent domestic and sexual violence and to provide services and support to all victims.

For several weeks, I have been advocating a compromise on a key provision aimed at addressing the epidemic of domestic violence against native women. I want to compliment my partner on this bill, Senator Crapo, who has been working hard to try to bridge the divide and address concerns with the provision in our bill that gives limited jurisdiction to tribal courts to make sure that no perpetrators of domestic violence are immune from prosecution. Senator Crapo has pushed hard and has indicated a willingness to compromise significantly, as have I. Sadly, others have continued to draw lines which would ultimately deny assistance to some of the most vulnerable victims. That is unacceptable.

I appreciate that there have at last been some renewed discussions about this bill in the House of Representatives but that is not enough. The only way to reauthorize VAWA this year is for the House to take up and pass the Senate-passed bill. If the House Republican leadership refuses to do that in the final days of this Congress, it is a shame.

I remain steadfast in my resolve to get this done and pass a good VAWA bill that protects all victims. I know Senator Crapo shares my resolve. I know every woman in the Senate and many other Senators and House members share our resolve. I know President Obama and Vice President Biden share our resolve.
We will be back next year. We will introduce a good bill, and we will pass it through the Senate. We will continue our discussions, and we will work tirelessly to have a good bill enacted into law. This is not the end of our efforts to renew and improve VAWA to more effectively help all victims of domestic and sexual violence.

We know that the epidemic of violence against native women is appalling, with a recent study finding that almost three in five native women have been assaulted by their spouses or intimate partners. We know that immigrant women are particularly vulnerable, with their immigration status another weapon that abusers can use to keep power and prevent reporting. We know that some victims cannot access needed services because of their sexual orientation or gender identity. We know that women and girls on college campuses are too much at risk, and more must be done to protect them. The list goes on.

We have shown a willingness to compromise but we must make progress on all of these issues. We must make things better, and never make things worse, for the most vulnerable of victims.

The community of advocates and service providers who work every day with victims of these terrible crimes is inspiring. It was their advice on the real needs of real victims that shaped this legislation, and they have fought with us every day to get this bill enacted. I want them to know how much I value the work they do and that I will not abandon their cause. We will continue working together, and we will reauthorize VAWA.

We have seen enough violence. If we cannot get the Leahy-Crapo bill over the finish line this year, we will come back next year, and we will get it done. I look forward to other Senators joining us as we continue this vital effort.

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