Leahy: Victims Have Waited Too Long, House Republicans Must Pass Senate VAWA Bill Now

[This Friday marks the one-year anniversary since Judiciary Committee Chairman Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) introduced with Senator Mike Crapo (R-Idaho) the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act. The Leahy-Crapo VAWA bill has broad bipartisan backing and was recently the subject of a supportive New York Times editorial – the latest of many – urging completion of congressional action on the bill in this lame-duck session. With only a few weeks left in the year, Senator Leahy submitted a statement for the record Thursday to remind House and Senate Republicans leaders that passing VAWA to protect domestic and sexual abuse and rape victims must be a priority.]

Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.),
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,
on The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act
November 29, 2012

This fall also marks the tenth anniversary of the passing of another great Senator, Paul Wellstone, and his wife Sheila. They were dear friends. Among the many things for which they are fondly remembered is the important work they did to combat domestic violence and help victims. We have made much progress on this issue, in large part thanks to the Violence Against Women Act, which has long demonstrated the bipartisan commitment to work together against domestic violence and rape.

Sadly, so much remains to be done. Recent reports find that almost one in four women have experienced severe domestic violence, and nearly one in five women have been raped. In some communities, the picture is much worse. According to the Department of Health and Human Services, one in five female college students will be a victim of sexual assault during college. A recent study found that three out of five Native American women have been assaulted by a spouse or intimate partner.

The bipartisan Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act includes vital provisions to help these and other particularly vulnerable victims. As the New York Times observed this weekend, “The act's reauthorization is must-do business for the lame-duck session. … Mr. Boehner should relent and allow the House to vote on the Senate bill.” I ask that the full Times editorial be placed in the record. Friday will mark a year since Senator Crapo and I introduced this bill. We have kept victims waiting too long. We should come together to act now.

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