January 23, 2013

Please forward to everyone you know who cares about ending domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking!

Breaking News Alert: VAWA Reintroduced Yesterday – Take Action Today by Contacting Your Senators!

Yesterday, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Senator Michael Crapo (R-ID) introduced S. 47, a strong, bipartisan bill that would reauthorize the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)! This bill closely mirrors the bipartisan legislation introduced by Senators Leahy and Crapo last Congress and would improve VAWA programs and strengthen protections for all victims of violence (see description of legislation below).

In order to continue our incredible momentum from last Congress, we need you to take action TODAY by contacting your Senators to co-sponsor S. 47. Our goal is to get 60 co-sponsors by January 31st so that VAWA can get to the Senate floor for a bipartisan victory. We need to keep the phones ringing starting right now!

So far, the bill has the following co-sponsors in addition to its chief sponsor, Senator Leahy (D-VT): Senators Ayotte (R-NH), Bennet (D-CO), Cantwell (D-WA), Casey (D-PA), Collins (R-ME), Coons (D-DE), Crapo (R-ID), Durbin (D-IL), Hagan (D-NC), Kirk (R-IL), Klobuchar (D-MN), McCaskill (D-MO), Mikulski (D-MD), Murkowski (R-AK), Murray (D-WA), Shaheen (D-NH), Tester (D-MT), Udall (D-CO), and Whitehouse (D-RI).

Also yesterday, Representatives Gwen Moore (D-WI) and John Conyers (D-MI) introduced H.R. 11, a House companion identical to the bipartisan Senate bill. The National Task Force calls on the House of Representatives to work together in a bipartisan effort to build on the momentum from the last Congress in order to reauthorize VAWA as a matter of priority.

Action Item:
Call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask the operator to connect you to your Senators. If you don't know who your Senators are, you can look them up here. When you're connected to their offices, tell the person who answers the phone:

1. I am a constituent from (city and state) and my name is _________.
2. I urge Senator ________ to co-sponsor the S. 47, a strong, bipartisan bill that would reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act.
3. Thank you and I look forward to hearing that the Senator is a co-sponsor.

###

Description of legislation: In addition to many important improvements throughout the bill that received bipartisan support last year, this bill also contains enhanced protections for tribal, LGBT and immigrant victims, which were identified as critical priorities by advocates across the country and also received bipartisan support last year. Last year's bill, however, also included a modest increase in the number of U visas (created by Congress in VAWA 2000) available to immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and certain other violent crimes who assist law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of the crime. Increasing the number of U visas helps both victims and law enforcement. Unfortunately, that provision led to a technical objection from House Republican leaders. In the interest of obtaining the swift reauthorization of VAWA, the Senate introduced the new VAWA bill without that provision in order to avoid any initial technical obstacles. However, this new VAWA bill does recommit Congress to important immigration provisions so that all victims are protected. Senator Leahy will be working hard to include the U visa increase in the comprehensive immigration reform legislation that will soon be considered by Congress. The members of the National Task Force likewise commit to support that effort.

###