February 4, 2013
Please forward widely!

GOAL: Pass VAWA in the Senate This Week!

S. 47, a strong, bipartisan bill - with 61 sponsors - that would reauthorize the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), sponsored by Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Michael Crapo (R-ID) is headed to the Senate floor for a vote THIS WEEK! This bill is very similar to 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 for an explanation of some of the changes).

Majority Leader Harry Reid (D-NV) has scheduled floor discussion to begin this afternoon. Then, after two days of party “retreats,” VAWA will come up again on Thursday. With 61 sponsors, victory is in sight. In anticipation of the impending vote, we need you to take action TODAY by contacting your Senators to thank them for co-sponsoring, or to ask them to co-sponsor and vote YES on S. 47. We also need to remind Senators to vote against any weakening or non-germane amendments! (A list of sponsoring Senators and Senators that still need to sponsor is at the end of this email.)

ACTION ITEM: CALL YOUR SENATOR(s) TODAY!!!
If you don’t see your Senator on the list of co-sponsors below, 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 (http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm). When you’re connected to their offices, ask to speak to the staff person who handles VAWA.

If your Senator IS already cosponsoring, tell or leave a message for the staff person:

1) I am a constituent from (city and state) and my name is ___________.
2) I want to thank Senator____ for co-sponsoring S. 47, a strong, bipartisan bill that would reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, and voting YES on the bill. Please urge Senator _____________ to follow Senator Leahy’s lead and vote NO on any weakening or non-germane amendments.

If your Senator is NOT already cosponsoring, tell or leave a message for the staff person:

1) I am a constituent from (city and state) and my name is ___________.
2) I urge Senator___ to co-sponsor S. 47, a strong, bipartisan bill that would reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, and to vote YES on the bill and vote NO on any weakening or non-germane amendments.
3) Thank you and I look forward to hearing that the Senator is a co-sponsor and/or voted for VAWA without harmful amendments.

ACTION ITEM: PARTICIPATE IN OUR PHOTO CAMPAIGN!
Join our “We need VAWA because...” campaign on Facebook and Instagram! Tag your photos on Instagram with #VAWA or submit your photos via email to our partners from The Leadership Conference Education Fund at lccref@gmail.com. Make sure to include your city and state name and your Senators’ and representative’s names in your statement so that your Senators/Representative knows that their state/district cares about VAWA.
ACTION ITEM: JOIN US IN A TWITTER CHAT ON FEBRUARY 11TH

In light of President Obama’s upcoming State of the Union address, we will be holding a “State of the VAWA” Twitter Chat on Monday, February 11th at 2pm EST to answer questions and engage the public in a dialogue about the importance of an inclusive VAWA. Send your questions to @NTFVAWA using #VAWAchat, and participate in the conversation on February 11th.

Description of legislation: In addition to many important improvements, such as addressing the criminal justice response to sexual assault, domestic violence homicides, housing needs, and campus victimization included in legislation last year, the current Senate bill also maintains enhanced protections for tribal, LGBT and immigrant victims. These provisions were identified as critical priorities by advocates across the country and received overwhelming bipartisan support last year in the Senate.

One provision from last year’s bill was not included- the modest increase in the number of U visas 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 (originally created by Congress in VAWA 2000). Increasing the number of U visas would help both victims and law enforcement. Unfortunately, that provision led to a technical objection from House Republican leaders and, 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. Other important provisions to help immigrant victims and their children from last year’s bill are included in S. 47. The National Task Force and Senator Leahy will also be working hard to include the U visa increase in the comprehensive immigration reform legislation that will soon be considered by Congress.

Another provision was added, the SAFER Act, S. 80, originally sponsored by Leahy and Cornyn (R-TX) which passed unanimously in the Senate late last year and promotes the elimination of sexual assault evidence (rape kits) backlogs that could be used to prosecute offenders and solve cold cases.

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So far, the bill has the following sponsors: Senators Ayotte, Kelly (R-NH), Baldwin, Tammy (D-WI), Baucus, Max (D-MT), Begich, Mark (D-AK), Bennet, Michael (D-CO), Blumenthal, Richard (D-CT), Boxer, Barbara (D-CA), Brown, Sherrod (D-OH), Cantwell, Maria (D-WA), Cardin, Benjamin (D-MD), Carper, Thomas (D-DE), Casey, Robert (D-PA), Collins, Susan (R-ME), Coons, Chris (D-DE), Crapo, Mike (R-ID), Donnelly, Joe (D-IN), Durbin, Richard (D-IL), Feinstein, Dianne (D-CA), Franken, Al (D-MN), Gillibrand, Kirsten (D-NY), Hagan, Kay (D-NC), Harkin, Tom (D-IA), Heinrich, Martin (D-NM), Heitkamp, Heidi (D-ND), Heller, Dean (R-NV), Hirono, Mazie (D-HI), Johnson, Tim (D-SD), Kaine, Tim (D-VA), King, Angus (I-ME), Kirk, Mark (R-IL), Klobuchar, Amy (D-MN), Landrieu, Mary (D-LA), Lautenberg, Frank (R-NJ), Leahy, Patrick (D-VT), Levin, Carl (D-MI), McCaskill, Claire (D-MO), Manchin, Joe (D-WV), Menendez, Robert (D-NJ), Merkley, Jeff (D-OR), Mikulski, Barbara (D-MD), Moran, Jerry (R-KS), Murkowski, Lisa (R-AK), Murphy, Christopher (D-CT), Murray, Patty (D-WA), Nelson, Bill (D-FL), Pryor, Mark (D-AR), Reid, Harry (D-NV), Rockefeller, John (D-WV), Sanders, Bernard (I-VT), Schatz, Brian (D-HI), Schumer, Charles (D-NY), Shaheen, Jeanne (D-NH), Stabenow, Debbie (D-MI), Tester, Jon (D-MT), Udall, Mark (D-CO), Udall, Tom (D-NM), Warner, Mark (D-VA), Warren, Elizabeth (D-MA), Whitehouse, Sheldon (D-RI), Wyden, Ron (D-OR). Please thank these Senators for their early support of the Violence Against Women Act.

Potential Sponsors of S. 47

Fischer, Deb - (R - NE) The only woman Senator, out of 20, who has yet to sponsor VAWA

#Alexander, Lamar - (R - TN)
#Coats, Daniel - (R - IN)
#Corker, Bob - (R-TN)
#Hoeven, John - (R - ND)
#McCain, John - (R - AZ)
#Portman, Rob - (R - OH)
#Yitter, David - (R - LA)
#Cornsyn, John - (R - TX)
#Enzi, Michael B. - (R - WY)
#Graham, Lindsey - (R - SC)
#Grassley, Chuck - (R - IA)
#Hatch, Orrin G. - (R - UT)
#Rubio, Marco - (R - FL)
#Toomey, Patrick J. - (R - PA)

N=new, #Voted for VAWA 2012

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For more information, fact sheets, press coverage, support letters and updates: www.4vawa.org.

Follow us on Twitter at @NTFVAWA and “like” our Facebook page. Don’t forget to tweet about VAWA using the hashtags #ReauthorizeVAWA, #VAWA4all and #VAWA.

If you aren’t on one of the VAWA email lists or want to add members of your staff or state/community leaders to our grassroots alerts e-mail list, send names and contact information including email to ntfvawaalerts@icasa.org. For more info, go to www.4vawa.org.