

# THE NEW YORK TIMES

## Opinion

EDITORIAL

### An Advocate for Women

Published: June 30, 2009

Domestic violence is a serious law enforcement and public health problem affecting as many as one in four women in this country. Yet Washington has devoted too little attention to reducing domestic violence and sexual assaults generally. We welcome President Obama's decision to create a new post, White House adviser on violence against women, and his appointment of a seasoned advocate for victims to fill it.

Lynn Rosenthal is a former executive director of the National Network to End Domestic Violence. She will report to Mr. Obama and Vice President Joe Biden, whose keen interest in the issue dates from his days in the Senate and his key role in enacting the 1994 Violence Against Women Act.

Ms. Rosenthal's challenge, and the administration's, will be to improve the carrying out of existing laws intended to protect women, starting with better coordination of the activities of all the government bureaucracies involved, including the Justice Department, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

A national survey of domestic violence shelters released in May showed a significant increase in the number of women seeking assistance since last fall, a rise largely attributable to the stresses of the economic crisis and rising unemployment. States need to set up more emergency shelters and find more transitional housing for

people fleeing violent situations. And they must do more to help these victims rebuild their lives.

Ms. Rosenthal will need to tackle bureaucratic and legal hurdles and find more money to help states, localities and charitable groups address those needs. She must also help end the scandal of the thousands of rape kits sitting untested in crime labs and police storage facilities across the country, allowing countless criminals to escape punishment. All of this will require strong and creative leadership from Ms. Rosenthal and Mr. Biden and from the president.

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