



ALERT: Reauthorize VAWA!

December 5, 2011

The Violence Against Women Act is due for reauthorization. Our wonderful Senate champions, Senators **Patrick Leahy (D-VT)** and **Mike Crapo (R-ID)**, introduced a bipartisan bill, S. 1925, on **Wednesday (11/30/11)** to reauthorize and improve VAWA! Not only will this bill continue proven effective programs, but it will make key changes to streamline VAWA and make sure that even more people have access to safety, stability and justice. The National Task Force to End Violence Against Women has worked closely with the Senators on the bill and the language clearly represents the voices of survivors. This is an important step forward for VAWA and we hope to get even more improvements as the bill moves forward! Our wonderful House champions **Congressman Lamar Smith (R-TX)** and **Congressman John Conyers (D-MI)** have been working closely with us and will introduce House legislation soon. If you have questions or want to report back about your efforts or results, please email ReauthorizeVAWA@gmail.com.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

What's most important now is to get ALL legislators to support VAWA's reauthorization! As a constituent, it is especially important for you to tell your Members of Congress how important VAWA is to victims and service providers in your community. To help with this the National Task Force has put together the attached **TOOL KIT** that will help you mobilize on the ground!

1. **Turn to page 10 of the TOOL KIT for background and send the following letter to the editor to your local papers!**

To The Editor:

Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking are pervasive issues throughout the United States In fact, these forms of violence affect everyone in [name of local community] in some way. The passage of the original Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in 1994 was a giant step forward for our nation and meant that our federal government formally acknowledged that domestic and sexual violence cause tremendous harm, and therefore put resources into helping victims and responding to these crimes. Our community and millions of individuals are safer and better off as a result.

The time has come to again reauthorize this critical legislation. Evidence shows that VAWA is working. But there is more work to do. On average, each day three people are murdered because of this violence in America and several hundred people are raped or sexually assaulted. Countless children witness this violence. The Violence Against Women Act of 2011 will build on efforts to prevent violence before it begins

and teach the next generation that violence is always wrong. We need more resources for all victims of violence. Congress must reauthorize this legislation to address this violence and build healthy communities. I urge [the name(s) of your member(s) of Congress and Senators] to sign on as co-sponsors of this legislation today.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title, Organization, Contact Info]

2. **Turn to page 9 of the TOOL KIT for background and tweet this:** Help Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. Call ur senators TODAY & RT! #vaw #dv #VAWA bit.ly/ReAuthVawa
3. **Email your Senators (http://www.senate.gov/general/contact_information/senators_cfm.cfm) and Representatives (<https://writerep.house.gov/writerep/welcome.shtml>) TODAY with this message:**

I am writing to you about the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, in order to encourage Senator/Representative _____ to sign on as a co-sponsor. The Violence Against Women Act has had an enormous impact since it was first reauthorized 17 years ago. Thousands of judges, law enforcement officers, prosecutors, civil legal attorneys, and victim service providers have had access to DOJ-approved training and resources and, as a result, have become significantly more effective in addressing the crimes of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

*Research has shown VAWA's effectiveness. A law enforcement training program developed in Maryland by the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and the Johns Hopkins University has developed state of the art protocols for law enforcement officers who answer domestic violence calls. The officers are taught how to collect evidence appropriately, how to establish if there is probable cause to arrest an alleged perpetrator, and how to conduct lethality assessments on the spot to ensure that victims get the services they need for safety. Since this training was rolled out, **domestic violence homicides in Maryland have dropped by 41%**. A 10 year study conducted in Kentucky found that **the issuance of protection orders reduced lethality and serious injury and saved the state \$85 million in averted criminal justice, healthcare, and property costs.***

Here is a link to a fact sheet that illustrates that VAWA has been instrumental in making victims safer, ensuring Constitutional protections for all parties, and improving the effectiveness of justice system and victim service responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking: [http://www.breakthecycle.org/sites/default/files/SafeguardsinVAWANTF\(2\).docx](http://www.breakthecycle.org/sites/default/files/SafeguardsinVAWANTF(2).docx). There are critics of VAWA who believe that VAWA encourages bad practices by the police and the courts. Nothing could be further from the truth. The fact sheet addresses many of those criticisms, so I invite you to read it and share it with your colleagues. Thank you.

Let's get bipartisan VAWA legislation passed together!! Thank you!