

NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FUND

December 4, 2004

A Nonpartisan Voter Engagement Project by the National Network to End Domestic Violence Fund

PROJECT UPDATE

This past summer, NNEDV Fund launched VotePower, a nonpartisan voter engagement project aimed at increasing battered women's participation in our country's electoral process. Unlike traditional voter mobilization campaigns, VotePower does not work to register individuals to vote during one particular election cycle. Instead VotePower seeks out solutions to the institutional barriers preventing battered women from exercising their right to vote in every election. To that end, programs in 19 states participated in a wide range of voter engagement activities to determine ways battered women could participate in the electoral process.

The major institutional barriers preventing battered women from voting include their need for safety and confidentiality, and lack of a consistent permanent address. The safety and confidentiality of battered women was of utmost importance while implementing VotePower. Because voter registration records are public record, participating programs worked with local and state elections officials to utilize safe means to register women to vote without compromising the confidentiality of their location. Many programs used existing state policies allowing survivors of domestic violence to remove their voter registration from public record. For women without a consistent permanent address, policies allowing homeless individuals to vote were evaluated and implemented.

In addition, programs looked at simple ways to include voter engagement as a regularly provided service. Many chose to include voter registration and education in staff or support group

meetings. Some included voter education in their community mailings, while others placed voter registration forms with other resource materials. Programs also held or attended nonpartisan election-related events, emphasizing how policy decisions made at the state house and the U.S. Capitol affect the daily lives of all citizens.

NNEDV Fund is proud of the work participating coalitions and programs did to increase battered women's participation in the 2004 election and look forward to continuing this important work. We currently are analyzing the results of VotePower efforts and will publish an official analysis and recommendations upon completion. Initial VotePower achievements and findings include:

- VotePower efforts safely registered nearly 1,000 battered women, shelter/program staff members and advocates in 5 states.
- Including community-based partnerships in 6 states, VotePower registered more than 12,000 individuals to vote.
- VotePower expanded NNEDV Fund and state coalitions' advocacy base by subscribing 1,000 individuals to receive news and alerts about domestic violence.
- A VotePower survey confirms the findings of a recent Lifetime Television for Women's poll – ending domestic violence is the issue most important to women voters.

For more information about VotePower, please feel free to contact Cheryl O'Donnell at 202-543-5566 ext. 23 or codonnell@nnedv.org.