

NATIONAL CENTER FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

POLICY ALERT: Contact Congress in August about VAWA 2005

Now is the time to contact Congress, to urge them to support the **Violence Against Women Act (VAWA 2005)**.

As members of the National Center for Victims of Crime, you are aware of the importance of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) in supporting crucial local programs to respond to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. First adopted in 1994, and then reauthorized in 2000, the act is currently up for a second reauthorization.

This legislation, "VAWA 2005," is currently moving through both the Senate and the House of Representatives. VAWA 2005 would continue successful programs and create new programs to expand our reach. New provisions include:

- The Sexual Assault Services Act (SASA) that provides funding specifically for direct services to sexual assault victims.
- Expansion of legal access to victims of dating violence.
- Programs to address the housing needs of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking victims.
- Increased funding to address domestic violence and sexual assault in rural communities.
- Increased funding specifically designated for communities of color to provide ethnically and linguistically appropriate programs.
- Increased funding and focus on the needs of Native American victims.
- Programs focusing on children and youth who have experience violence.

VAWA must be reauthorized this year. Your support and action are crucial!

Here are three things you can do to help:

1. Contact your congressional representatives today.

Check if your representative and senators have already signed as a co-sponsor to VAWA 2005. List of co-sponsors are posted on our Web site at www.ncvc.org/policy.

To find out who your senators and representative are, go to www.senate.gov or www.house.gov.

If your representative or senators have not yet pledged support to VAWA 2005, write them a letter to let them know the issue is important to you and your community. The most effective letters are personalized and sent through the mail.

A sample letter is available on our Web site at www.ncvc.org/policy.

If your representative and senators are already co-sponsors, write or call their offices and thank them for their support.

2. Meet with your members of Congress.

Your representative and senators are on congressional recess for the month of August and are at home meeting with constituents. This is a great time to meet with your elected official. Call your legislator's local office and schedule a meeting to talk about VAWA.

Invite your representative to your agency to see first-hand the work you are doing. A rape crisis center in North Carolina recently invited a legislator to tour the facility and to talk about their work. The representative signed onto VAWA that day!

3. Help promote VAWA 2005 in your community

Send a letter to your local newspaper editor encouraging support for VAWA. The more information you include that directly affects your community, the better the chances are of having your letter printed. Most letters to the editor should be about 150-250 words. Remember to include your contact information, including phone number, so that the paper can call to confirm that you wrote the letter. For guidance on op-eds and letters to the editor, see www.vawa2005.org/mediaactionkit.pdf

Speak to other groups in your community about sending their own letters to Congress. Involving faith-based groups, community groups, or even your own circle of friends will ensure your congressional representatives know VAWA is important to their constituents.

For summaries of the congressional bills, including a special focus on provisions related to sexual assault, see the National Center's Policy page, at www.ncvc.org/policy.

For more action ideas, talking points, bill summaries, grass-roots organizing tools, and a media toolkit, visit www.VAWA2005.org.

The National Center for Victims of Crime is the nation's leading resource and advocacy organization for victims of all crime. Our mission is to forge a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives. Working with local, state, and federal partners, we are dedicated to serving all individuals, families, and communities harmed by crime.