For Immediate Release

MEDIA CONTACT:
ANGELA HALE, 512.289.2995, angela@redmediagroup.com

TEXAS COUNCIL ON FAMILY VIOLENCE AND TEXAS ASSOCIATION AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT SALUTE TEXAS REPUBLICAN CONGRESSIONAL LEADERS FOR SUPPORTING THE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE LAMAR SMITH AND CONGRESSMAN TED POE HIGHLIGHT SUCCESSES OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT IN TEXAS AND SUPPORT VAWA REAUTHORIZATION

Austin, Texas – February 22, 2012– The Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV) and the Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) today jointly recognize Chairman Lamar Smith’s and Congressman Ted Poe’s support for reauthorization of the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

On February 16, the United States House Judiciary Committee conducted an oversight hearing of the Office of Violence Against Women (OVW). The Committee invited testimony from OVW Director Susan Carbon, who answered the Committee’s questions regarding OVW’s administration of VAWA. In their remarks at the hearing, both Chairman Smith and Congressman Poe highlighted the strong successes of VAWA.

Chairman Smith noted his continuing strong support of VAWA since initial passage in 1994, and he further declared, "It is essential that programs like these are in place to protect victims not just from physical bruises but from the emotional and mental scars as well. Funding through VAWA has helped women escape abuse and rebuild their lives."

Congressman Poe reflected on his experience as a long time judge in Harris County: “I remember when domestic violence was treated by law enforcement as a family problem, not as social health issue or a crime. I am glad we have moved away from that concept. We’re not talking about statistics here, we’re talking about real people that are hurt by others who claim they love these people.”
VAWA represents a core federal response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. TCFV and TAASA salute Chairman Smith’s and Congressman’s Poe leadership in the Judiciary Committee and look to them to foster a swift reauthorization of VAWA.

VAWA represents our federal government’s coordinated community response to sexual assault and family violence services. Rape crisis centers, family violence centers, law enforcement, prosecutors and the courts all form a part of this response.

“Texas enjoys excellent representation in Congress and particularly on the Judiciary Committee. We appreciate that Chairman Smith and Congressman Poe are working in a bi-partisan manner to reauthorize the landmark Violence Against Women’s Act. VAWA enhances all parts of our state’s coordinated community response, from victim services to law enforcement to prosecutors and courts,” said Gloria A. Terry, President of the Texas Council on Family Violence. “The bottom line: VAWA has saved lives for over a decade,” said Terry.

According to Annette Burrhus-Clay, Executive Director of TAASA “VAWA prioritizes serving the over 2 million Texans who have been victims of sexual assault. Without VAWA, rape crisis centers in Texas would lose their effectiveness and some would close their doors, leaving victims without services and justice. The sooner Congress reauthorizes this landmark legislation with its key elements and adequate funding levels intact, the better Texans will be for it,” said Burrhus-Clay.

Last year, Texas received over $8.8 million as a result of VAWA. Rape crisis centers used VAWA and other funding to serve victims by answering nearly 34,000 sexual assault hotline calls to Texas rape crisis centers and serving more than 15,000 sexual assault victims through support groups. More than 80,000 victims of domestic violence including: women, children and men found safety and services at family violence centers.

###

The Texas Council on Family Violence (TCFV), formed in 1978, is one of the largest domestic violence coalitions in the nation. TCFV promotes safe and healthy relationships by supporting service providers, facilitating strategic prevention efforts, and creating opportunities for freedom from domestic violence. [www.tcfv.org](http://www.tcfv.org)

The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault (TAASA) is the statewide organization committed to ending sexual violence in Texas. A non-profit educational and advocacy organization based in Austin, TAASA member agencies comprise a statewide network of more than 80 crisis centers that serve rural as well as metropolitan areas. Founded in 1982, the agency has a strong record of success in community education, legal services, youth outreach, law enforcement training, legislative advocacy, and curricula and materials development. Additional information about TAASA can be found at [www.taasa.org](http://www.taasa.org)