[WASHINGTON (Wednesday, November 14, 2012) – The Senate voted nearly six months ago in favor of the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, a bill that has broad support and provides meaningful resources for thousands of rape and domestic violence victims throughout the country. With little time left before Congress adjourns for the year, and with VAWA’s current charter already expired, Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) called on Congress to pass his reauthorization bill without further delay.]

Statement of Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT),

Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee,

On The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act

November 14, 2012

Congress is back from an extended recess. Now, the House and Senate must get back to work and pass urgently needed legislation. I know that there are several important matters to address before the end of the year, including disaster relief for the victims of Hurricane Sandy, the fiscal cliff that threatens our economy, a crucial Farm Bill, and confirmation votes on scores of judicial nominees. Among these important legislative priorities, however, is the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, which I was proud to write with Republican Senator Mike Crapo of Idaho, and which won the support of all women Senators. This bipartisan, Senate-passed bill deserves to be on our short list of priorities for the rest of this year.

I was pleased to see that the President and Speaker Boehner have indicated a willingness to work toward a bipartisan solution to avoid the fiscal cliff. On VAWA, the time for posturing has long passed, as well. Congress has failed to pass the bipartisan Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, which won passage by the Senate with 68 votes more than 200 days ago. I am committed to ensuring that the VAWA addresses the changing needs of all victims. I stand ready, as I have from the start, to work with members from both parties. I look forward to hearing from Republican leaders in the House and to seeing this important measure enacted.

Both parties could have celebrated the passage of yet another bipartisan VAWA reauthorization bill after the Senate’s convincing vote in April, and today, more victims would be receiving the critical protections included in the Senate-passed VAWA reauthorization bill. In the months since the Senate passed the Leahy-Crapo bill, we have been reminded of the importance of VAWA.
In Wisconsin, a gunman opened fire at a Milwaukee-area spa, wounding four people and killing three, including his wife. The Republican governor in Minnesota called for tougher domestic violence laws because the gunman had previously abused his estranged wife. The Leahy-Crapo bill would strengthen the ability of states and service providers to identify domestic violence cases with a significant risk of homicide and take effective steps to protect potential victims.

In Massachusetts, an Amherst College student who was raped by a classmate bravely stepped forward in the pages of her school newspaper to describe the lack of response from school administrators to the crime. That young student, along with countless others like her, deserves attentive and respectful treatment in the wake of such a heinous act of sexual violence. Our bill will encourage such a response with new campus protections. Without congressional action, these and other crucial new protections in the Leahy-Crapo bill will not be able to help victims and prevent crimes nationwide.

These recent events remind us that innocent lives are on the line when it comes to domestic and sexual violence. Delaying these needed protections is unacceptable. These victims of rape and domestic violence cannot wait. It is time for Congress to come together and to send the bipartisan Leahy-Crapo bill to the President without further delay.

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