Women of Color Network Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Summary

The Women of Color Network (WOCN) commits to updating our constituents with important facts of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). As a contributing member of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women Steering Committee (NTF), we want to summarize what’s happening and how proposed changes affect YOUR programs and communities.

VAWA Reauthorization Challenges in 2012

• The 112th Congress did not reauthorize VAWA before it adjourned.
• This represented a missed opportunity to enact many important improvements to VAWA – housing, campus and sexual assault provisions and enhanced services and explicit programs for communities of color, immigrant, tribal and LGBT victims and survivors.

How does this affect currently funded programs?

• Programs and services will not close because Congress did not reauthorize VAWA so long as Congress continues to appropriate funding for these programs supported by the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) at the Department of Justice. However, uncertainty remains as budget crises at the local, state and federal levels continue to threaten program funding. We need to continue to stress how critical the programs are to the safety, recovery and well-being of survivors, families and communities.

Reintroducing VAWA in 2013

• On January 22, 2013 VAWA was reintroduced in the 113th Congress by Senators Leahy (D-VT) and Crapo (R-ID). Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid has promised to bring VAWA up for a vote in the next week.
• The new VAWA reauthorization bill is S. 47.
• In addition to many important improvements, such as addressing the criminal justice response to sexual assault, domestic violence homicides, housing needs, and campus victimization included in legislation last year, the current Senate bill also maintains enhanced protections for tribal, LGBT and immigrant victims. These provisions were identified as critical priorities by advocates across the country and received overwhelming bipartisan support last year in the Senate.

Some key changes to the new VAWA bill (S.47)

• Improvements to the SAFER Act (nation-wide law enforcement tools to reduce the backlog of rape kits used to prosecute offenders and solve cold cases)
• Elimination for requests for more Immigration U visas; this will now be transferred immigration reform.

The Women of Color Network stands in solidarity with The National Task Force calls for a bipartisan effort to reauthorize VAWA as a matter of priority. For updates please check the Women of Color Network Facebook page or www.4vawa.org.