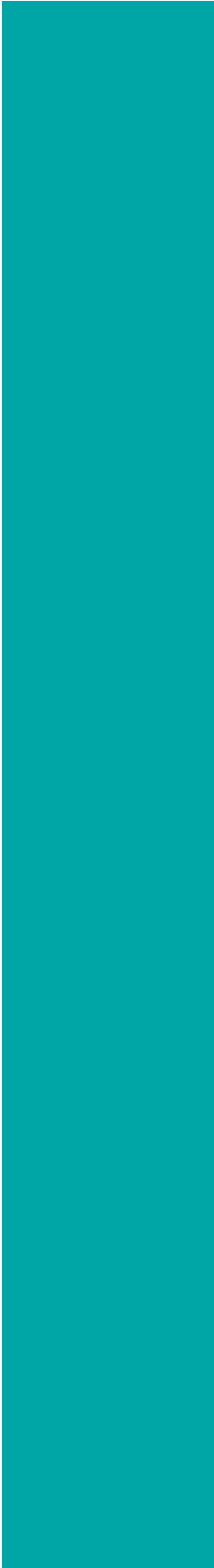


History of VAWA

The Violence Against Women Act of 1994 (VAWA) became law after four years of exhaustive investigation focused on the extent and severity of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking committed against women. In a series of committee hearings conducted between 1990 and 1994, Congress heard testimony from a variety of experts, including state attorneys general; federal and state law enforcement officials; prosecutors; business and labor representatives; physicians; legal scholars; and victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Congress' extensive fact-finding revealed that violence against women was a pervasive problem of national scope.

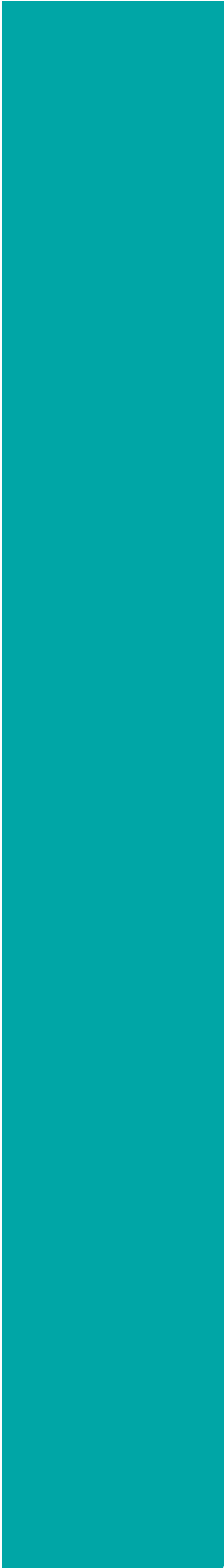
As a result of these findings, Congress passed VAWA, a comprehensive legislative package targeting violence against women. VAWA and subsequent legislation created new federal interstate domestic violence, stalking and firearms crimes, strengthened federal penalties for repeat sex offenders, and required states and territories to enforce protection orders issued by other states, tribes and territories. VAWA also created legal relief for battered immigrants that prevented abusers from using immigration law to control victims and established the toll-free National Domestic Violence Hotline.¹ Additionally, VAWA authorized funds to support battered women's shelters, rape prevention education, domestic violence intervention and prevention programs, and programs to improve law enforcement, prosecution, court, and victim services responses to violence against women.



The Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), created in 1995, administers the VAWA grant programs, handles the Department of Justice's (DOJ) legal and policy issues regarding violence against women, coordinates Departmental efforts, provides national and international leadership, receives international visitors interested in learning about the federal government's role in addressing violence against women, provides technical assistance to communities across the country (including tribal communities) and responds to requests for information regarding violence against women. In 2003, OVW became an independent office within the DOJ, headed by a Presidentially-appointed director who reports to the Attorney General.

The Violence Against Women Act of 2000 (VAWA 2000) was enacted with bipartisan support and signed into law on October 28, 2000. VAWA 2000 reauthorized the critical grant programs created by the original VAWA and subsequent legislation and establishes new programs, such as initiatives addressing elder abuse, violence against women with disabilities, and supervised visitation in domestic violence cases. VAWA 2000 also strengthens the original law by improving protections for battered immigrants, sexual assault survivors, and victims of dating violence. In addition, the new law enables victims of domestic violence who flee across state lines to obtain custody orders without returning to jurisdictions where they may be in danger and improves the enforcement of protection orders across state and tribal lines.

Under VAWA grant programs administered by DOJ, OVW has awarded more than \$1.6 billion in grant funds, making over 3,700 discretionary grants and 500 STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors) formula grants to the states and territories. These grant programs help state, tribal, and local governments and community-based agencies to train personnel, establish specialized domestic violence and sexual assault units,



assist victims of violence, and hold perpetrators accountable. Thousands of STOP subgrants have supported community partnerships among police, prosecutors, victim advocates, and others to address violence against women. On the federal side, the department has prosecuted more than 1650 cases involving interstate domestic violence, interstate stalking, interstate violation of a protection order, or possession of a firearm while subject to a protection order or after conviction for a misdemeanor crime of domestic violence.

¹The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) also is responsible for implementing a significant portion of the programs created under VAWA and VAWA 2000. HHS administers the National Domestic Violence Hotline, a toll-free crisis line that provides information to victims throughout the country about local resources. HHS also has expanded resources for domestic violence programs and battered women's shelters, and raised awareness of domestic violence in the workplace and among health care providers. In addition, HHS provides grants to states for rape prevention and education programs conducted by rape crisis centers and helps build new community programs to prevent intimate partner violence.

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