

THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT: *RENEWING THE COMMITMENT TO PROTECTING ALL VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE*

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act was introduced in November 2011 by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.) and Senator Mike Crapo (R-Idaho). The legislation enjoys bipartisan support, and a total of 61 Senators are cosponsors. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was signed into law in 1994, and was reauthorized in 2000 and 2005.

The national response to domestic violence has drastically improved since VAWA became law.

Since VAWA was enacted in 1994, the annual incidence of domestic violence has dropped by more than 50 percent, and every state has enacted laws making stalking a crime, and strengthened criminal rape statutes. Programs authorized by VAWA have provided victims with critical services, including transitional housing and legal assistance, and address the unique barriers faced by rural victims, elderly victims, and victims with disabilities.

Domestic violence reporting has also dramatically increased since VAWA was signed into law. More victims are coming forward and receiving lifesaving services to help them move from crisis to stability. Because of VAWA, **communities are coordinating their responses to domestic and sexual violence by bringing together victim advocates, law enforcement, the courts, health care professionals, and leaders within faith communities.**

The effort to end domestic violence is far from over, however. The Center for Disease Control's 2010 National Intimate Partner Survey found that **one in four women have been the victim of severe physical domestic violence** and one in five women have been raped in their lifetime. The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act will take additional steps forward in the effort to stamp out domestic and sexual violence.

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act builds on past successes and charts a course forward to end domestic and sexual violence.

The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act strengthens and streamlines existing programs, while recognizing the difficult fiscal decisions facing the federal government today. Among the legislation's key provisions, the bill will:

- **Renew Successful Programs** – The VAWA reauthorization bill reauthorizes important programs – including STOP Grants, Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program, Transitional Housing Assistance Grants, legal assistance for victims, youth prevention programs, and many others – that have helped law enforcement, prosecutors, and victim service providers keep victims safe and hold perpetrators accountable.
- **Consolidate to Reduce Administrative Costs** – The VAWA reauthorization bill consolidates programs to reduce administrative costs and avoid duplication. It consolidates 13 existing programs, many of which overlap, into four.
- **Reduce Authorization** – To acknowledge current fiscal realities, this legislation reduces authorizations by more than 17 percent from the 2005 reauthorization. It reduces or keeps even the authorization for every VAWA program, eliminates or consolidates several, and adds only one small new grant program.
- **Promote Accountability** – VAWA Reauthorization incorporates new accountability provisions, patterned after those added with the support of Republican Senators to the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act and other bills, but tailored to fit VAWA programs. They include strict new audit requirements, enforcement mechanisms for grantees that fail to fix problems found in the audits, restrictions on grantees' executive compensation and investments and their administrative costs – all aimed to ensure that VAWA funds are used wisely and efficiently.

Support for S. 1925 and the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act

“VAWA has unquestionably improved the national response to these terrible crimes. We urge **you to support VAWA’s reauthorization to build upon its successes** and continue to enhance our nation’s ability to hold perpetrators accountable and keep victims and their children safe from future harm.” – *National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women, February 9, 2012*

“[W]e salute you for including the new domestic violence homicide prevention, sexual assault and prevention purpose areas, the enhanced housing and legal services initiatives and the increased tribal, immigration, underserved, population specific, racially and ethnically identified, immigration, faith community and other gateway program delivery concepts in S. 1925. Significantly, we also thank you for **ensuring that the voices of those who work on these projects at the field level are heard in Washington, D.C.**” – *National Network to End Domestic Violence, January 30, 2012*

“Reauthorizing VAWA **will send a clear message that this country does not tolerate violence against women** and show Congress’ commitment to reducing domestic violence, protecting women from sexual assault and securing justice for victims.” – *National Association of Attorneys General, Signed by 47 State Attorneys General, January 11, 2012*

“We believe that S. 1925 – like the 2000 and 2005 reauthorizations that preceded it – will help us better address continuing problems and remaining unmet needs. The legislation will expand services to immigrant and lesbian, gay, and transgendered communities, who not only experience the highest rates of violence but often have the most difficulty in accessing services. In recognition of the persistent problem of sexual violence, S. 1925 also will **strengthen the capacity of local, state, and federal law enforcement to investigate and prosecute these crimes.**” – *Rahm Emanuel, Mayor, City of Chicago; Antonio R. Villaraigosa, Mayor, City of Los Angeles; Michael R. Bloomberg, Mayor, City of New York; April 19, 2012*