

November 25, 2008

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Alan Mollohan
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science
and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Mikulski, Senator Shelby, Representative Mollohan, and Representative Frelinghuysen:

On behalf of the millions of victims, advocates and professionals that our organizations represent, thank you for your extraordinary work to increase funding for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and for increasing the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund cap in the FY 2009 House and Senate Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) Appropriations bills. Both Houses of Congress have clearly recognized the needs of victims by funding these proactive and cost-effective programs. In the final stages of negotiation, we ask you to continue this crucial work and to maintain the modest funding increases that the House and the Senate have provided for programs that prevent and end domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking.

While these pervasive and life-threatening crimes affect every community across our nation, we have seen the positive impact of VAWA programs: rates of non-fatal and fatal domestic violence have dropped, more victims feel confident to come forward to report these crimes and seek services, and states have passed over 660 laws to combat these crimes. VAWA saved nearly \$14.8 billion in net averted social costs in its first six years alone.

VAWA's continued progress, however, is threatened in our current harsh economic climate which has contributed to spikes in violent crime and budget cuts at the federal, state and local level. As a tragic result, many victims who have made the courageous choice to seek assistance must be turned away due to insufficient funding for local programs. In FY 2008, \$12 million was cut from vital VAWA programs, further reducing communities' ability to meet the increase in demand for services. For example, in just one day, while over 53,000 men, women and children were served by domestic violence shelters and programs across the country, over 7,707 service requests by victims went unmet because programs lacked the resources to provide services. Additionally, there are still large parts of the country that do not have sufficient resources to provide basic services to victims of sexual violence. We cannot allow this unmet need to continue.

The gap in services created by too little funding and an increase in demand for services was exacerbated in FY 2008 when the annual distribution (cap) on the VOCA fund was cut by a devastating \$35 million. The non-taxpayer derived VOCA funds are used by states and communities to support over 4,000 agencies that provide critical direct services to almost 4 million victims in crisis each year. This cut forced programs to lay-off staff, reduce programming and services, and, ultimately, to serve fewer victims in need.

Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking are at the root of many other perpetual, costly social ills, and we must commit substantial resources toward preventing and ending this cycle of violence. While a tough economy may tempt lawmakers to cut or maintain program funding, we urge you to continue to invest in the progress and promise of VAWA and VOCA by maintaining the modest funding increases in the FY 2009 Congressional Budget.

Please see the enclosed chart that illustrates the funding increases proposed by both the House and the Senate in the CJS Appropriations bills. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to ending domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact Monica McLaughlin, Public Policy Specialist at the National Network to End Domestic Violence on 202.543.5566 ext. 112 or at mmclaughlin@nnev.org.

Sincerely,

American Humane Association
American Probation and Parole Association
American Psychological Association
Association of VAWA Administrators
Break the Cycle
Campaign for Funding to End Domestic and Sexual Violence
Family Violence Prevention Fund
Jewish Women International
Justice Solutions
Legal Momentum
The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators
National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards
National Center for Victims of Crime
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Congress of American Indians Task Force on Violence Against Native Women
National Council of Jewish Women
National Domestic Violence Hotline
National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence (Alianza)
National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Women (NOW)
National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children
National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault (SCESA)
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape
The Rebecca Project for Human Rights
Sacred Circle National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women
Sheila Wellstone Institute
Stop Family Violence
YWCA USA

CC:

The Senate Committee on Appropriations
The House Committee on Appropriations
Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid
Senate Minority Leader Mitch McConnell, Jr.
Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi
House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer
House Minority Leader John Boehner

Commerce, Justice, Science Appropriations for VAWA Programs Compares House and Senate Requests for FY 09

	House	Senate	
<u>Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund Cap</u>	\$650*	\$635	
<u>Department of Justice, Office on Violence Against Women</u>			
<u>Violence Against Women Prevention and Prosecution Programs</u>	House	Senate	VAWA Auth.
Grants to Combat Violence Against Women	\$200	\$185	--
Of which:			
\$178 House	\$162.9 Senate		is for STOP Grants (authorized at \$225)
\$20 House	\$17.4 Senate		is for Transitional Housing Assistance (authorized at \$40)
\$2 House	\$1.9 Senate		is for the National Institute of Justice (not authorized)
Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies	\$60	\$59	\$75
Rural Domestic Violence Assistance Grants	\$41	\$42	\$55
Violence on College Campuses	\$10	\$9.4	\$15
Civil Legal Assistance	\$41	\$42	\$65
Elder Abuse Grant Program (formerly Elder and Disabled Women)	\$5	\$4.5	\$10
Sexual Assault Services Program	\$15	\$12	\$50
Education & Training to End Violence Against Disabled Victims	\$7	\$6.6	\$10
Safe Havens for Children Project (Supervised Visitation)	\$15	\$14	\$20
Training Programs to Assist Probation and Parole Officers	\$3	\$5	\$5
Stalking Database	\$3	\$3	\$3
Court Training and Improvements	\$3	\$2.8	\$5
Tracking of Violence Against Indian Women	\$1	\$0.9	\$1
Analysis and Research on Violence Against Indian Women	\$1	\$0.9	\$1
National Resource Center on Workplace Responses	\$1	\$0.9	\$1
Services to Advocate for and Respond to Youth	\$5	\$2.8	\$15
Assisting Children and Youth Exposed to Violence	\$3	\$2.8	\$20
Engaging Men and Youth in Prevention	\$3	\$2.5	\$10
Televised Testimony (Child Abuse)	\$0	\$0.9	--
<u>Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs</u>			
	House	Senate	VAWA Auth.
Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA; Special Advocates)	\$15	\$15	\$12
Child Abuse Training Programs for Judicial Personnel	\$3	\$2.8	--

All Numbers Expressed in Millions

*The House FY 2009 Commerce, Justice, Science bill removes the Office of Justice Programs Management and Administrative cost from VOCA funding. This is critical as it would increase the amount of VOCA funding available to meet victims' needs by an additional \$37 million.