

November 25, 2008

The Honorable Tom Harkin
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Arlen Specter
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Obey
Chair
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jerry Lewis
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human
Services, Education, and Related Agencies
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Senator Harkin, Senator Specter, Representative Obey, and Representative Lewis:

On behalf of the millions of victims that our organizations represent, thank you for your extraordinary work to increase funding for programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) funded through the Labor Health and Human Services (LHHS) 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.

Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking are devastating, life-threatening social ills that plague individuals and families in every community across our nation. Programs funded by the LHHS bill, including the *Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA)*, the *National Domestic Violence Hotline*, the *Rape Prevention and Education Program (RPE)*, and the *Community Initiatives to Prevent Abuse (DELTA)* provide both lifesaving services to victims in crisis, and fundamental prevention and education programs to combat violence before it starts.

These programs serve millions of victims and community members each year. In just one day in 2007, over 53,000 men, women and children were served by domestic violence shelters and programs across the country. Tragically, however, many victims who have made the courageous choice to seek assistance must be turned away due to insufficient funding for local programs. For instance, on that same day, over 7,707 requests by victims for services went unmet. Community-based sexual assault programs are increasingly reporting that it is more and more difficult to meet the demand for critical public awareness activities. We cannot allow this unmet need to continue.

The gap in services created by too little funding and an increase in demand was exacerbated in FY 2008 by a LHHS Appropriations bill rescission that cut FVPSA by \$2.1 million and RPE by \$600,000. History shows that in harsh economic times there is always a significant increase in victims requesting services. Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking are at the root of many other perpetual, costly social ills, and in order to end this cycle we must commit substantial resources toward preventing and ending these crimes.

While a tough economy may tempt lawmakers to cut or maintain program funding, we urge you to invest in the future of our nation by providing much needed increases to these cost-effective, lifesaving programs. These programs are working to break the cycle of violence, but to see further savings, both in lives and in dollars, we urge you to maintain the 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 LHHS 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 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

**Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education Appropriations for VAWA Programs
Compares House and Senate Requests for FY 09**

	House	Senate	VAWA Auth.
FVPSA/Battered Women Shelters and Services (ACF)	\$130.5*	\$125	\$175
National Domestic Violence Hotline (ACF)	\$2.9*	\$3.5	\$3.5
Rape Prevention and Education (CDC)	\$42.1*	\$43	\$80
Community Initiatives to Prevent Abuse	\$*	\$5	\$6
Health Provider Domestic Violence Education Initiative	\$3^	n/a	

* The House of Representatives Appropriations Committee did not complete their Labor, Health and Human Services bill for FY 2009. These numbers are from the Labor, Health and Human Services Subcommittee mark-up. Funding levels for *Communities Initiatives to Prevent Abuse* were not available for the House.

^ Administered by the Office of Women's Health in the Office of the Secretary.

All Numbers Expressed in Millions