



February 9, 2009

The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

SENT VIA MAIL AND FAX

RE: Protect and Restore Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding from the Crime Victims Fund.

Dear President Obama:

We are writing on behalf of the millions of victims and survivors of crime in the United States who receive critical services that help them recover from the physical, financial, emotional, spiritual and often life-threatening consequences of crime.

In 1984, Congress (including then-Senator Joseph Biden as an original cosponsor) and President Reagan joined in a bipartisan spirit to pledge the use of federal criminal fines and special assessments to support victim services through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). This year marks the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of that historic occasion. Ever since, the federal government has kept this pledge by retaining all amounts deposited into the Crime Victims Fund by criminal offenders—*not taxpayers*—for the exclusive support of crime victim services. Thanks to the Crime Victims Fund, every year more than 4,400 victim assistance agencies and crime victim compensation programs in every State provide essential services to millions of victims of all types of crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide, drunk driving, child abuse, white collar crimes, and international and domestic terrorism.

In FY 2000, because of fluctuating deposits into the Crime Victims Fund, Congress began delaying obligations from the Fund. According to congressional committee reports, the Fund was capped in order "to protect against wide fluctuations in receipts into the Fund, *and to ensure that a stable level of funding will remain available for these programs in future years.*" This commitment has been restated ever since in annual appropriations bills and through amendments to the authorizing statute.

Unfortunately, the previous Administration continually sought to renege on this pledge by rescinding the amounts that have been retained in the Crime Victims Fund and by proposing other steps that would have severely jeopardized the Fund's integrity, viability and sustainability. Thanks to Congress's overwhelming support for VOCA, in which both you and Vice-President Biden joined, those efforts were emphatically and repeatedly rejected.

We write this letter to urge your Administration in its FY 2010 budget submission to clearly reaffirm your ongoing support for VOCA and the Crime Victims Fund. This position was expressed in an April 4, 2008 letter in which you, Vice-President Biden and many of your Senate colleagues:

1. Explicitly rejected the attempts to rescind the Crime Victims Fund or to alter its original fundamental purpose to be available *exclusively* to support programs and services for crime victims;
2. Supported an annual limit on Fund obligations (the "cap") that, at a minimum, restores the amount available for state victim assistance formula grants to the FY 2006 amounts; and
3. Ensured that the Fund's Antiterrorism Emergency Reserve continues to be treated as amounts in addition to the annual cap, consistent with Congressional intent and Justice Department policy and practice.

Each of these points was made in direct response to specific provisions contained in the previous Administration's budget submissions. The unwarranted challenges to VOCA's security caused extraordinary anxiety among the thousands of victim service programs that rely on VOCA funding and the crime victims those programs serve. Indeed, the mere persistence of the previous Administration's threats to VOCA caused some states, as a preventive measure, to hold back or reduce funds from local programs. Exacerbating these anxieties, devastating cuts to the VOCA fund in FY 2008 forced many organizations to reduce services and ultimately serve fewer victims in need.

The signers of this letter represent an unprecedented coalition of crime victims, national victim advocacy organizations, state and local victim service providers, criminal justice professionals and many others. We applaud the fact that key members of your Administration, including you, Vice-President Biden and Attorney General Holder, have demonstrated such a strong and long-standing commitment to ensuring justice for crime victims. We trust that your staunch support of victims will be reflected in your FY 2010 budget by protecting the Crime Victims Fund and providing an adequate funding level to sustain and enhance vitally needed services for crime victims.

Sincerely,

National Association of VOCA Assistance  
Administrators  
American Correctional Association  
American Humane Association  
American Probation and Parole Association  
American Society of Victimology  
Arizona Voice for Crime Victims  
Association of VAWA Administrators  
Break the Cycle  
Coalition of Pennsylvania Crime Victim  
Organizations  
Court Appointed Special Advocates of New  
Jersey, Inc.  
International Association for Victim Assistance  
Jewish Women International  
Justice Solutions, Inc  
Mary Byron Project  
Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.  
Mothers Against Drunk Driving  
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence  
National Association of Crime Victim  
Compensation Boards  
National Association of Victim Service  
Professionals in Corrections  
National Center for Victims of Crime  
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence  
National Council of Jewish Women  
National Crime Victim Law Institute

National Crime Victims Research and  
Treatment Center  
National Criminal Justice Association  
National District Attorneys Association  
National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of  
Domestic Violence  
National Leadership Council for Crime Victim  
Justice  
National Network to End Domestic Violence  
National Organization for Victim Assistance  
National Organization of Parents of Murdered  
Children, Inc.  
National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending  
Sexual Assault (SCESA)  
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic  
Violence  
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network  
(RAINN)  
Sacred Circle National Resource Center to End  
Violence Against Native Women  
SAFENOWPROJECT  
Security On Campus, Inc.  
Sheila Wellstone Institute  
Stop Family Violence  
Texas CASA  
The National Judicial College  
YWCA USA