



NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR THE 111TH CONGRESS

The National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV) is the nation's premier domestic violence advocacy organization, representing 56 state and territory coalitions along with the millions of victims they serve. Founded in 1994, NNEDV's mission is to create social, political and economic environments in which violence against women no longer exists. Since our founding, NNEDV has been educating and informing federal and state lawmakers on the emerging policy issues occurring in communities throughout the United States and its territories.

YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN FEDERAL POLICY!

Your voice can make a difference in federal legislation that impacts the lives of survivors. Join NNEDV's Action Alert Listserv so that you can be poised and ready to act on behalf of survivors. Sign up at <http://capwiz.com/nnedv/mlm/signup/>.

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR THE 111TH CONGRESS

An enormous opportunity awaits the 111th Congress and the Administration. Every Member of Congress can positively impact victims by supporting legislation and funding that promote victim safety, perpetrator accountability and prevention efforts. The current harsh economic times have significantly increased the demand for victims services, including relocation assistance, counseling, emergency shelter, legal services, transitional housing and childcare. Now is the time to match legal justice with economic justice so that victims can make real choices to escape the abuses they have faced.

Below are the legislative priorities for the National Network to End Domestic Violence.

- **Support Lifesaving Intervention Services for Victims of Domestic Violence**
- **Fully Fund Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Raise the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Cap**
- **Provide Safe and Affordable Housing for Domestic Violence Victims**
- **Enact Sensible Firearms Laws to Keep Victims Safe**
- **Provide Economic Empowerment to Victims**
- **Provide a Coordinated Response to Addressing Domestic Violence Among Military Families**

1. **Support Lifesaving Intervention Services for Victims of Domestic Violence**

In 1984, Congress passed the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), the first federal legislation to support domestic violence shelters and programs. FVPSA-funded programs across the country provide lifesaving services to hundreds of thousands of adults and children fleeing abusive situations by providing them with critical services such as emergency shelter, crisis intervention, hotline services, legal assistance and case management. In just one day in 2008, domestic violence programs and shelters served over 60,000 individuals.

FVPSA is the lifeline for domestic violence programs and remains the only federal funding stream exclusively for

these programs. Yet, in 2008 FVPSA's authorization expired. It is essential that this critical legislation is reauthorized expeditiously.

Congress should take the following actions:

- **Reauthorize and fund the Family Violence Prevention Services Act (FVPSA) at the authorized level of \$175 million.** The economic crisis has created a shortfall in funding for services, even as demand for services rises. Congress must expediently reauthorize and support full funding for FVPSA.
- **Support \$295 million in the Labor, Health and Human Services and Education appropriations bill,** which includes the following domestic violence and sexual assault programs: FVPSA, the National Domestic Violence Hotline, Community Initiatives to Prevent Abuse, also known as DELTA, Rape Prevention and Education (RPE), and other programs to prevent homelessness and improve the healthcare response to domestic violence.

2. Fully Fund the Violence Against Women Act and Raise the VOCA Cap

When Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of 1994 and subsequently reauthorized it in 2000 and 2005, they provided the federal government with the authority to take a holistic approach to combat violence against women by bringing together community-based victim organizations into partnership with the justice system. Unfortunately, the promise of VAWA has not been fully realized because many of the initiatives have not been funded or implemented.

Further, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), created by Congress in 1984, created a fund for victim services out of fines, fees and penalties paid by federal criminals, rather than taxpayer dollars. Over 4,000 agencies rely on continued VOCA Victim Assistance Grants distributed in formula grants to each state to provide services to nearly four million crime victims. However, between Fiscal Year 2006 and Fiscal Year 2007, Victim Assistance Grants were cut by \$25.3 million. As a result, many victim service agencies were forced to cut staff and services; consequently, agencies have to turn away victims in desperate, life-threatening situations.

Congress should take the following actions:

- **Fully fund the Violence Against Women Act at the authorized level of \$683 million in the Commerce, Justice, and State appropriations bill.** The economic crisis is forcing states to cut funding for crucial victim service programs even as requests for services increase. By fully funding VAWA programs at \$683 million, Congress makes a crucial investment in our communities that will save lives, rebuild families, conserve resources, and prevent future crimes.
- **Support the swift passage of the Improving Assistance to Domestic and Sexual Violence Victims Act of 2009 (S.327).** Introduced by Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT), S. 327 will improve implementation and correct several provisions in the VAWA 2005 that were inconsistent with U.S. Code or cited incorrectly. Passage of a VAWA technical fix bill will better serve victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.
- **Increase the annual distribution (cap) of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund.** Congress must raise the VOCA cap to \$705 million in order to adequately fund support services which gives victims the tools to cope with the traumatic aftermath of crime.

3. Provide Safe and Affordable Housing for Domestic Violence Victims

The interrelated nature of domestic violence and homelessness is undeniable: 92% of homeless women have experienced severe physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives. NNEDV works to ensure that legislation addressing homelessness meets the needs of domestic violence victims and their children.

Congress should take the following actions:

- **Increase funding for McKinney-Vento programs.** To meet the needs of homeless individuals and families seeking services, Congress should fund McKinney-Vento programs at \$3 billion.

4. Enact Sensible Firearms Laws to Keep Victims Safe

A gun is the most commonly used weapon in domestic homicide. Nearly one-third of all women murdered are slain by a current or former intimate partner. Guns are used in almost two-thirds of these domestic homicides. The presence of a gun dramatically increases the chance that a domestic violence incident will end in murder. One study found that in Atlanta, family and intimate assaults involving guns were 12 times more likely to result in death than family and intimate assaults not involving guns.

NNEDV supports legislation that restricts gun and firearm ownership by those convicted of domestic violence crimes.

Congress should take the following actions:

- **Close the Gun Show Loophole.** Currently, domestic abusers and other dangerous felons can purchase guns at gun shows from unlicensed sellers without a Brady criminal background check. This loophole gives criminals a “license to kill” and threatens the safety of our families and communities. Congress must pass the S. 843 Introduced by Senator Frank Lautenberg (D-NJ) which extends criminal background checks at gun shows, thereby closing the gun show loophole and keeping guns out of the hands of the unlawful.

5. Provide Economic Empowerment to Victims

Many abusers control household finances and forbid victims from gaining economic independence. When victims leave violent situations, it is absolutely essential that they have the ability to build economic stability to stay free from abuse. NNEDV supports legislation that promotes economic independence as well as legislation that prohibits insurers and employers from engaging in discriminatory practices against domestic violence victims.

Congress should take the following actions:

- **Pass the Paycheck Fairness Act.** While the House of Representatives has already passed the Paycheck Fairness Act (HR 12), the Senate has not. The Paycheck Fairness Act will improve employers’ ability to comply with the Equal Pay Act. Passage of the Paycheck Fairness Act is critical to helping victims of domestic violence shore up their ability to be economically independent and break free from a cycle of violence.
- **Pass the Security and Financial Empowerment Act (HR 739).** The Security and Financial

Empowerment (SAFE) Act, introduced by Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA) would allow access to unemployment insurance for victims who have to leave work as a result of violence, allow victims to use unpaid leave to attend to their needs, bar employment discrimination against victims of sexual and domestic violence, as well as prohibit insurance discrimination against victims of domestic violence.

- **Enhance economic justice.** Victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking often require wrap-around services to break free from the cycle of violence. Congress should expand efforts to ensure that TANF, child support, welfare-to-work, childcare, and other public benefit policies and programs address the safety, self-sufficiency and well-being of all recipients.

6. Provide a Coordinated Response to Addressing Domestic Violence In Military Families

As we prepare for the return of troops from Iraq, the Department of Defense and Veterans Affairs must provide comprehensive support services for domestic violence victims in military households. NNEDV urges Congress to prioritize addressing domestic and sexual violence in the military homecoming package. NNEDV supports legislation that encourages collaboration between the military and local domestic violence programs in order to ensure victim safety and batterer accountability. Legislation must also provide confidential screenings and counseling programs for veterans and their families. Further legislation must provide adequate funding to military and non-profit organizations which provide these crucial services.

Congress should take the following actions:

- **Pass the Military Domestic and Sexual Violence Response Act (HR. 840).** HR 840, introduced by Representative Louise McIntosh Slaughter (D-NY), will aid in the reduction of sexual assault and domestic violence involving members of the armed forces and their family members through enhanced prevention and intervention programs.