

## The Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013: Safely and Effectively Meeting the Needs of More Victims

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is the cornerstone of our nation's response to domestic and sexual violence. A strong bipartisan bill to reauthorize VAWA passed in the Senate on February 12, 2013 (78-22) and in the House of Representatives on February 28, 2013 (286-138). President Obama signed the bill into law on March 7, 2013.

## What will this renewal of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) change?

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has improved our nation's response to violence. However, not all victims have been protected or reached. *VAWA 2013 will close critical gaps in services and justice.* VAWA 2013 reauthorized and improved upon lifesaving services for all victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking - including Native women, immigrants, LGBT victims, college students and youth, and public housing residents. VAWA 2013 also authorized appropriate funding to provide for VAWA's vitally important programs and protections, without imposing limitations that undermine effectiveness or victim safety.

**Justice and safety for Native American Women:** Native American victims of domestic violence often cannot seek justice because their courts are not allowed to prosecute non-Native offenders--even for crimes committed on tribal land. VAWA 2013 includes a solution that would give tribal courts the authority they need to hold offenders in their communities accountable.

**Safe housing for survivors:** Landmark VAWA housing protections that were passed in 2005 have helped prevent discrimination against and unjust evictions of survivors of domestic violence in public and assisted housing. VAWA 2013 expands these protections to individuals in all federally subsidized housing programs, explicitly protects victims of sexual assault and creates emergency housing transfer options.

**Protections on college campuses:** Provisions in VAWA 2013 add additional protections for students by requiring schools to implement a recording process for incidences of dating violence, as well as report the findings. In addition, schools would be required to create plans to prevent this violence and educate victims on their rights and resources.

Maintaining VAWA grant programs: VAWA grants are effectively meeting the needs of millions of victims across the country. VAWA 2013 includes many important improvements to these grant programs, including allowing state domestic violence coalitions to be the lead applicant on Grants to Encourage Arrest program; ensuring that specific stakeholders, including domestic violence coalitions, play a meaningful role in developing state STOP plans; and providing a formal process for the Office on Violence Against Women to receive coalition and other key domestic violence and sexual assault community input.

**Justice and safety for LGBT survivors:** Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, and Bisexual survivors of violence experience the same rates of violence as straight individuals, however, they sometimes face discrimination when seeking help and protection. VAWA 2013 prohibits such discrimination to ensure that all victims of violence have access to the same services and protection to overcome trauma and find safety.

**Maintain and improve protections for immigrant survivors:** VAWA 2013 maintains important protections for immigrant survivors who are abused while making key improvements to existing provisions including strengthening the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act and the provisions around self-petitions and U visas.

## The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is effective and important.

VAWA creates and supports comprehensive, cost-effective responses to the pervasive and insidious crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. Since its enactment in 1994, VAWA has improved how our nation addresses these four crimes. More victims are reporting these crimes, and the rate of both fatal and non-fatal intimate partner violence has decreased. VAWA not only saves lives, it saves money. In its first six years alone, VAWA saved taxpayers at least \$12.6 billion in net averted social costs.

## **CORE VAWA GRANT PROGRAMS**

**Grants to Combat Violent Crimes Against Women/STOP,** through formula grants to states, supports enforcement, prosecutorial and judicial staff training, supports advocates and encourages a coordinated community response to domestic violence and sexual assault.

**Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP),** through formula grants to states, provides funding for direct services for victims of sexual assault.

**Civil Legal Assistance for Victims (LAV)** funds critical legal services for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault, including in the areas of family law and housing and public benefits assistance.

**Transitional Housing Grants** help meet the ongoing need victims have for safe, affordable housing after leaving emergency shelter to rebuild lives free from violence.

**Grants to Encourage Arrest (GTEAP)** supports a coordinated community and criminal justice system response regarding arrest and enforcement of protection order laws to enhance victim safety and ensure offender accountability.

**Services for Rural Victims** provides funding for programs to address the unique needs of victims in rural areas.

**Tribal and Underserved Programs** support the overall goal of ending domestic violence and sexual assault by ensuring that these communities also benefit from VAWA's resources.

**Prevention and Youth Programs** support efforts to stop violence before it begins and support children, teens and young adults.