

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA) APPROPRIATIONS

Why it Matters:

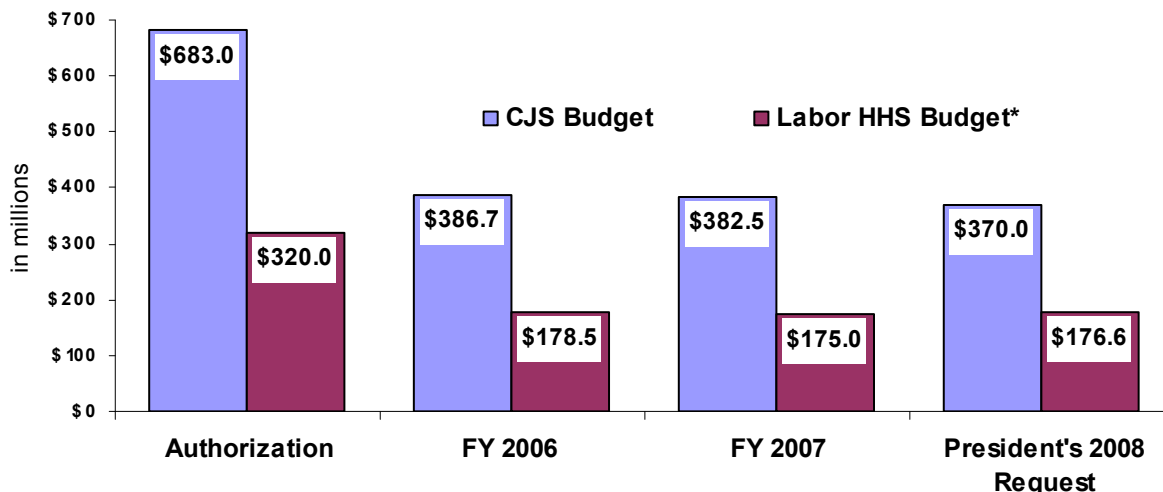
Over the past ten years, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), has brought together the criminal justice, social service and public health systems in an effort to intervene and prevent domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking in our communities. Local, state and national laws have changed; services, businesses, and communities are responding to victims' needs; and studies show that victims seeking services and reporting of crimes has increased. Congress and the Administration recognize the importance of VAWA programs as they have reauthorized the law and increased federal funding three times over the past ten years. This commitment not only protects lives now but prevents future violence and saves our communities billions of dollars in intervention services. On January 5, 2006, President Bush signed VAWA 2005 into law.

Congress should match this commitment to our communities by fully funding VAWA in fiscal year 2008.

VAWA Authorizations & Appropriations for 2008

- In 1994 VAWA was authorized at \$1.6 billion over 5 years. In 2005, Congress recognized the great impact VAWA has on our communities and reauthorized the act with increased funding at \$3.33 billion over 5 years.
- **In FY 2007, Congress clearly saw the need for increased funding** and responded by **passing increases for VAWA programs** in both the House and Senate Commerce, Justice, Science appropriations bills.
- Currently, essential programs that **aid children** who witness violence, as well as **fund rape crisis centers and innovative prevention programs**, do not receive funding as authorized.
- The President's FY '08 Budget Request proposes funding for VAWA programs at \$421.6 million. **This amount is \$406.4 million less than authorized by Congress in 2006.**
- The President's FY '08 Budget Request proposes consolidating all the VAWA programs into one block grant program open to all grantees, ignoring the Congressional intent behind its reauthorization.
- **Solution: Congress should reject the President's proposal and insure full funding for VAWA.**

VAWA Funding: Authorization and President's 2008 Request



* This amount includes funding for FVPSA programs that are authorized in legislation not included in VAWA.

Congressional Support

“Over the past 12 years, Congress has taken great care to ensure that VAWA grants are provided to a variety of vital domestic violence programs. It is deeply disheartening that this Administration’s skewed budgeting priorities could roll back our nation’s successes in investigating, prosecuting and preventing domestic abuse.”

— Sen. Biden (D-DE)

“Congress clearly intended for the Department of Justice (DOJ) to allocate specific monies for specific grant programs for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. The President’s proposal flies in the face of the recent VAWA reauthorization that clarified this process. President Bush talks about creating a better life for Americans, but his budget fails to deliver on his words yet again.”

— Sen. Mikulski (D-MD)

Why VAWA Works

- Since 1996, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has answered over 1 million calls. The Hotline answers over 16,000 calls a month and provides assistance in 139 languages.
- More victims are reporting violence: among victims of violence by an intimate partner, the percentage of women who reported the crime was greater in 1998 (59%) than in 1993 (48%).
- Studies show that in the first 5 years of VAWA, an estimated \$14.8 billion was saved on medical, legal and other victimization costs by spending only \$1.6 billion for VAWA programs.
- States have passed more than 660 laws to combat domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.
- All states have passed laws making stalking a crime and changed existing laws that often treated date or spousal rape as a lesser crime than stranger rape.
- VAWA doubled federal penalties for repeat sex offenders.
- The number of women murdered by an intimate partner was steady for two decades, but declined by 22% from 1993 to 2001.

History of VAWA

VAWA 1994 - With its initial passage in 1994, VAWA brought together, for the first time, the criminal justice system, social services, and private non-profit organizations responding to domestic violence and sexual assault. VAWA provided: federal prosecution of interstate domestic violence and sexual assault crimes; the interstate enforcement of protection orders and the first protections for battered immigrant victims in danger of being deported after reporting crimes against them. VAWA also began to focus on underserved populations and Native victims.

VAWA 2000 - In 2000, Congress reauthorized VAWA to provide additional resources and protections for victims of violence. VAWA 2000 identified the additional related crimes of dating violence and stalking and provided for additional resources to prosecute these crimes and provide services to survivors. Also created was a much-needed legal assistance program, as well as programs to address problems surrounding child custody and visitation for families experiencing violence. VAWA also continued to expand protections for battered immigrants.

VAWA 2005 - The reauthorization of VAWA in 2005 continues existing life-saving programs and created new programs to build a range of prevention and intervention efforts to support women, men and children to live healthy, safe lives. VAWA 2005 addresses gaps in prevention services, housing, health care responses and employment issues related to domestic and sexual violence. VAWA 2005 brings services to more individuals and communities including children and teens, Native women and victims of sexual assault.

For More Information

- Contact Jill Morris, Public Policy Director, National Coalition Against Domestic Violence at (202) 745-1211 or at jmorris@ncadv.org or Ellen Fern at the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence at (202) 289-3903 or at efern@wpllc.net.
- Visit www.ncadv.org to download the complete appropriations briefing book from the *Campaign to End Domestic and Sexual Violence*.