

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

Why it Matters:

Enacted by President Reagan in 1984, the Victims of Crime Act created the Crime Victims Fund as a **non-taxpayer funding resource for services that help crime victims** cope with the trauma and aftermath of crime. More than 4,400 local agencies from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands, depend on the VOCA Fund assistance grants to **serve nearly 4 million crime victims each year.**

“This program matches compassion with conservative fiscal responsibility.”

– US Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK)

HOW VOCA WORKS

- **VOCA funds consist of fines and penalties collected from federal offenders NOT tax payer dollars.**
- VOCA funds are distributed to states to support two types of programs: 1) crime victim compensation programs and 2) victim assistance programs.
- **Crime victim compensation programs** pay many out-of-pocket expenses incurred by victims as a result of crime, including medical and counseling costs, funeral bills, and lost wages.
- **VOCA-funded victim assistance programs**, such as rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters, provide life saving services, support and guidance in the aftermath of violence.
- VOCA assists all victims of crime.

VOCA IN DANGER

- **This is the third year the Administration has attempted to wipe out the VOCA balance.**
- The Administration’s FY 2008 budget request seeks the removal of \$1.3 billion from the Crime Victims Fund to be moved to the General Treasury.
- This year, the Administration is proposing to use taxpayer dollars to fund a \$625 million VOCA cap—making VOCA dependent upon annual **taxpayer funds**.
- **This would mean that at the beginning of FY 2009 there would be a zero balance in VOCA.**

CONSEQUENCES OF LOSING VOCA

- **Without adequate funding for VOCA, programs in all 50 states and six additional jurisdictions will have to layoff staff, limit services, and discontinue services for special populations of victims, such as children.**
- The money for VOCA will come from taxes, instead of criminal fines.



WHO VOCA HELPS

- VOCA-funded victim assistance programs **serve nearly 4 million crime victims each year.**
- These services help victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and drunk driving, as well as survivors of attempted homicide.
- VOCA provides funding for the Federal Victim Notification System.
- VOCA funds provide emergency relief to victims of terrorism and mass violence.
- VOCA funds are used for child abuse prevention and treatment grants.
- Local prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and victim advocates are all eligible for funds.
- **Domestic violence and sexual assault victims make up half of those receiving services.** They receive this type of assistance through shelters and rape crisis centers and child abuse treatment programs.

“In every State and every community across the country, the Crime Victims Fund plays an essential role in helping crime victims and their families meet critical expenses, recover from the horrific crimes they endured, and move forward with their lives” - US Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT).

HOW TO SAVE VOCA

- ⇒ **CONTACT YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND TELL THEM TO REJECT THE PRESIDENT’S BUDGET REQUEST TO CANCEL VOCA. Congress must PROTECT THE VOCA FUND BALANCE.**
- ⇒ Write, email and call your Members of Congress. Contact information can be found at www.congress.org or by calling the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121.
- ⇒ **Talk to the media about how your local programs rely on VOCA funds to help victims of crime and how VOCA funds are threatened.**
- ⇒ You can find sample letters, press releases, and phone scripts to educate your legislators and media about VOCA at www.ncadv.org.

RESOURCES

For more information on the VOCA , please contact the following organizations:

- The National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators www.navaa.org
- The National Center For Victims of Crime www.ncvc.org
- The National Organization for Victim Assistance www.trynova.org
- The National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards www.nacvcb.org
- Justice Solutions www.justicesolutions.org

For more information please see our website at www.ncadv.org or www.naevs.org.