

Public Policy Update

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It is our mission to provide current information on the latest national legislation affecting the domestic violence community. This newsletter is designed to provide you with policy updates, calls to action, links to useful resources, and other valuable information. This newsletter is in addition to the critical policy action alerts NCADV already circulates to the community. By staying actively involved and informed, you can help us in our effort to enact effective domestic violence legislation. Please feel free to forward this information to your colleagues and community.

August 9, 2005 Edition

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Action Alert:

Schedule a meeting with your Members of Congress during the August Recess!

As you know, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) will expire in September and NCADV needs your help to reauthorize this landmark piece of legislation. **Your Senators and Representatives will be in their home districts meeting with constituents from August 1 until September 2. NCADV is asking all domestic violence advocates to schedule meetings with their Members of Congress during the Congressional recess to discuss the importance of VAWA reauthorization and the need to make VAWA a congressional priority.**

Access the [NCADV VAWA 2005 Advocates Action Guide](#) for step by step instructions on setting up congressional meetings, writing letters to Members of Congress and newspaper editors, and organizing community outreach events to support VAWA Reauthorization. Also, see below for our tailored [Senate VAWA Reauthorization Action Guide](#).

VAWA 2005 Update:

House Judiciary Markup -- On July 27, 2005 the [House Judiciary Committee](#) marked up the Department of Justice reauthorization bill ([H.R. 3402](#)) which incorporates many of the VAWA 2005 components and programs. The committee reported on the bill and voted unanimously to move the bill to the House floor. The House will probably vote on VAWA 2005 in September following the August Congressional Recess. **NCADV encourages advocates that speak or meet with their Members of the House of Representatives to ask the House to include all provisions of [HR 2876](#) into the final VAWA 2005 bill.**

Senate Judiciary Hearing -- On July 19, 2005 the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) held a hearing on VAWA 2005. Testifying at the hearing were [Office of Violence Against Women](#) Director Diane Stuart; [Family Violence Prevention Fund](#) spokesman M.L. Carr; [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#) Executive Director Lynn Rosenthal; [National Center for Victims of Crime](#) Executive Director Mary Lou Leary; [National Sheriff's Association](#) President Ted Sexton; and [Avon](#) spokesperson and actress Salma Hayek. The testimonies provided a broad range of voices on domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. M.L. Carr stated: "Our young people are witnessing violence, experiencing violence and in many cases growing up to perpetuate the same violent patterns found in their families and communities. We must end violence before it starts. The new VAWA helps us to do that." The speakers were warmly received by the Committee, and Sen. Orrin Hatch (R-UT) noted that, "Before 1994, domestic violence and sexual assault were underreported and under-enforced crimes -- the Violence Against Women Act has helped turn that around... We will get this passed this year." The Senators in attendance, Judiciary Chairman Senator Specter (R-PA), Sen. Biden (D-DE), Sen. Hatch (R-UT), Sen. Sessions (R-AL), and Sen. Schumer (D-NY), all renewed their commitment to VAWA reauthorization. [To download NCADV's written testimony presented to the committee, please click here.](#)

Senate Judiciary Markup -- Due to time constraints and a full docket, the Senate VAWA 2005 bill ([S. 1197](#)), was not marked up or voted on in the Senate Judiciary Committee. **The bill cannot move to the Senate floor for a vote until the Senate Judiciary Committee convenes to mark up and vote on the bill. [PLEASE CONTACT YOUR SENATOR](#) AND ASK THAT VAWA 2005 BE MADE A LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING THE AUGUST RECESS.**

[Please see below for a sample letter, telephone script, and letter to the editor regarding the Senate markup. If your Senator serves on the \[Senate Judiciary Committee\]\(#\), we especially need your help – VAWA cannot be reauthorized if it is not reported out of the Judiciary Committee.](#)

Senate Judiciary Committee Members

Committee Chair: [Arlen Specter](#) (R-PA)
(202) 224-4254

Ranking Member: [Patrick Leahy](#) (VT)
(202) 224-4242

Republican Members:

Democratic Members:

[Orrin Hatch](#) (R-UT) -- (202) 224-5251
[Jeff Sessions](#) (R-AL) -- (202) 224-4124
[Charles Grassley](#) (R-IA) -- (202) 224-3744
[Jon Kyl](#) (R-AZ) -- (202) 224-4521
[Mike DeWine](#) (R-OH) -- (202) 224-2315
[John Cornyn](#) (R-TX) -- (202) 224-2934
[Tom Coburn](#) (R-OK) -- (202) 224-5754
[Lindsey Graham](#) (R-SC) -- (202) 224-5972
[Sam Brownback](#) (R-KS) -- (202) 224-6521

[Charles Schumer](#) (D-NY) -- (202) 224-6542
[Joseph Biden](#) (D-DE) -- (202) 224-5042
[Edward Kennedy](#) (D-MA) -- (202) 224-4543
[Herbert Kohl](#) (D-WI) -- (202) 224-5653
[Russell Feingold](#) (D-WI) -- (202) 224-5323
[Richard Durbin](#) (D-IL) -- (202) 224-2152
[Dianne Feinstein](#) (D-CA) -- (202) 224-3841

Legislation Update:

House introduces SAFE Act to provide economic security for domestic violence victims. On June 30, 2005 [Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard \(D-CA\)](#), along with 28 colleagues in the House introduced the [Security and Financial Empowerment Act, \(H.R. 3185\)](#), designed to give victims of domestic violence greater economic stability and provide employers with additional resources to address the consequences of domestic violence in the workplace. Each year, thousands of domestic violence victims lose their jobs due to domestic violence, and are forced by financial constraints to stay in abusive relationships. The SAFE Act makes it possible for victims to take unpaid leave to attend to matters related to their abuse, such as legal proceedings, medical care, or finding a safe place to live without jeopardizing their employment. In addition, it provides unemployment insurance for victims who are forced to leave their jobs as a result of their abuse. Over half of the U.S. states have laws that extend unemployment compensation to victims of domestic violence in certain circumstances. The SAFE Act would replace the inconsistent and often insufficient protections offered by existing state laws with a federal standard that would apply uniformly throughout the nation.

Immigrant Victims of Violence Prevention Act of 2005 – On June 30, 2005, [Representative Jan Schakowsky \(D-IL\)](#) and 77 co-sponsors introduced the [Immigrant Victims of Violence Prevention Act of 2005 \(H.R. 3188\)](#). Upon introduction Representative Schakowsky stated that, “We must remove the perverse incentive in our laws for women to stay in abuse relationships.” The bill protects immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, trafficking, or child abuse from deportation or economic insecurity when they leave abusive relationships. The bill forbids law enforcement from apprehending immigrant victims at domestic violence shelters, victim services organizations or programs, rape crisis centers, family justice centers, or at supervised visitation centers. The bill also prohibits arrests while the person is at a courthouse for a protection order case, child custody case, or other civil or criminal case relating to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, or trafficking. Additional protections are also extended to petitioners seeking U and T visas, and the bill expands the self-petition provisions in VAWA. Finally, the bill makes public benefits available to immigrant victims of violence, including SSI, Food Stamps, TANF, Social Services Block Grant, and Medicaid.

In the News:

Washington. Washington law now prohibits judges from delaying or denying a divorce on the basis of pregnancy. The highly publicized case of Shawna Hughes prompted the Washington

legislature to change the law. Supreme Court Judge Paul Bestine denied Hughes a divorce while she was pregnant, in accordance with the law prohibiting the dissolution of marriage until the paternity of the unborn child is known. An appellate panel recently upheld the judge's decision, but while the case was pending, the Washington legislature changed the law. Mr. Hughes had a history of domestic violence and is current in jail for federal drug charges.

Colorado. Tenants who are currently victims of domestic violence in Colorado gained additional protections this week from a new housing law which allows victims to break their leases to escape their abusers. While the new law still requires tenants to pay one month of their rent within three months of vacating the property, it allows victims to forgo the substantial penalties which often accompany lease termination. The new law also stipulates that tenants who experience domestic violence cannot be evicted from their homes solely because of problems resulting from domestic violence.

Oregon. The state legislature recently passed a law that preserves telephone services for victims of domestic violence. The new law, sponsored by State Senator Vicki Walker (D-Eugene), states that phone companies cannot discontinue the phone service of domestic violence victims; rather they must place these victims on payment plans assuring a safe link in times of need. This law has been supported by Cheryl O'Neil, the executive director of [Womenspace](#), a shelter and support service program for domestic violence victims. For six years Cheryl O'Neil advocated for the passage of this law, citing the vast amounts of financial problems that prevent victims from obtaining phone service and the reluctance of phone companies to help victims. To qualify for a payment plan, victims must have a court-issued protective order and make regular payments to their phone company. This law will take effect on September 1, 2005.

South Carolina. Seven South Carolina counties received a \$900,000 grant from the Department of Justice to help them prosecute criminal domestic violence cases. The grant will be used to hire three new prosecutors, who will work with and train a team of volunteer attorneys. South Carolina Attorney General Henry McMaster explained that, "We learned from the counties where we're operating now with our pro bono prosecutors that it's very common for a defendant to go into court for his jury trial on a domestic violence charge, expecting no prosecutor and possibly no victim to be there in which case the case is generally dismissed." The grant also funds three courtroom victim advocates, an immigration outreach coordinator, and faith-based initiatives.

Kansas City, Missouri. The Kansas City Style Revealed fashion show premiered on Thursday July 28, 2005 to benefit the [Rose Brooks Center](#). Over 535 people attended, raising \$35,000 for the local domestic violence program. The proceeds from this inaugural event will be used to support the center's Emergency Shelter program, domestic violence hotline, and the daily operations of the center. Envisioned by University of Missouri student Marianne Thompson, the fashion show was the first of its kind and magnitude. The Style Revealed fashion show will continue to be an annual event.

Reminder:

Donate Old Cell Phones to Help Domestic Violence Programs -- Time is running out to donate those old cell phones. The Body Shop's [Donate a Phone, Save a Life](#) cell phone collection campaign ends **August 31, 2005**. Once again, NCADV has teamed up with The Body Shop and the [CTIA Wireless Foundation](#) for the annual cell phone collection drive. Cell phones dropped off at [The Body Shop](#) locations will be sold, refurbished, or recycled with the proceeds benefiting NCADV and the Wireless Foundation.

From Our Main Office in Denver, Colorado:

SAVE THE DATE: NCADV CONFERENCE - JULY 9-12, 2006. The NCADV National Domestic Violence Conference will be held in Atlanta, Georgia July 9-12, 2006. Watch for email alerts and website postings for our call for workshop proposals in the late summer of 2005. Questions? Email conference@ncadv.org.

Senate Reauthorization Action Guide:

[VAWA Reauthorization Sample Letter to Senator](#)

[VAWA Reauthorization Sample Phone Script to Senator](#)

[VAWA Reauthorization Sample Letter to the Editor](#)

VAWA Reauthorization Sample Letter to Senator

The Honorable [Senator's Name]
United States Senate

Dear [*Senator's Name*]:

Over the past 10 years Congress has responded positively and effectively to help end domestic violence in our communities by funding Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA programs such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline, domestic violence shelters, and increased trainings for police, prosecutors and court officials have all contributed to the decline in domestic violence since VAWA was first authorized in 1994. VAWA is more than good social policy; it is also good fiscal policy. The first VAWA, authorized in 1994, has saved nearly \$14.8 billion in net averted social costs.

VAWA expires in September 2005. **In order to reauthorize VAWA before its expiration, we ask that you make VAWA a legislative priority immediately following the August recess. It is imperative that the Judiciary Committee report and vote on VAWA (S. 1197) in the Senate before it expires in September.**

In recent years the success of VAWA programs has resulted in a growing demand for services, with more victims and their children being referred to agencies every day. If Congress does not reauthorize and strengthen VAWA, thousands of local communities, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors and victims assistance programs will lose valuable Federal support to end domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.

In addition to reauthorizing existing VAWA programs, we hope that you will support legislation that develops innovative VAWA programs to ensure that victims and their children can sustain safe housing, have better access to public benefits, receive legal assistance and provide a safe workplace. The reauthorization of VAWA gives Congress a unique opportunity to continue and expand successful programs that further the safety and stability of the lives of survivors of domestic violence.

Without VAWA programs, victims in *[insert your city and state]* cannot access the services they need to escape from violence. During the past decade, VAWA has saved lives and helped millions of women and children find safety, security and self-sufficiency.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact *[insert your name and program]*. We look forward to working with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,

[Your Name and Organization]

VAWA Reauthorization Sample Phone Script to Senator

My name is *<your name>*. I am a constituent, and I work at *<name of shelter or program>*. I urge *<Senator's name>* to vote on the Violence Against Women Act of 2005 immediately following the August recess. It is imperative that the Judiciary Committee report and vote on VAWA (S. 1197) in the Senate before it expires in September. VAWA has protected millions of victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. In our community alone, VAWA has been instrumental in providing funding and training for *<list key programs>*. *<Name of your shelter or program>* serves *<number>* of victims each year. It is imperative that Congress reauthorize existing VAWA programs and create new programs to meet our community's needs. If you have any questions or if I can provide you with additional information, please contact me at *<phone number>*. Thank you.

VAWA Reauthorization Sample Letter to the Editor

To The Editor:

Recently, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was introduced in Congress with bipartisan support. With its passage in 1994 and reauthorization in 2000, Congress acknowledged that domestic and sexual violence cause tremendous harm to our families and communities. VAWA provided resources to helping victims of domestic and sexual violence, including immigrant, rural, and older victims and victims with disabilities. VAWA has provided resources for police and court training to increase the prosecution of domestic and sexual violence offenders.

VAWA expires in September 2005. In order to reauthorize VAWA before its expiration, lawmakers must make VAWA 2005 a legislative priority following the August recess. It is imperative that the Senate Judiciary Committee report and vote on the Violence Against Women Act of 2005 (S. 1197) as soon as possible.

On average, three women are killed in this country each day by their husbands or boyfriends as a result of domestic violence. More than 700 women are raped or sexually assaulted each day in our country. Countless children witness this violence. The Violence Against Women Act of 2005 builds on past efforts by targeting resources to children and youth who have been exposed to violence, and provides resources to help some of our marginalized citizens who experience this violence. Thousands of local communities, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, and victims assistance programs rely upon VAWA to support victims and to end domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act this year will strengthen families and keep our communities safe. Lawmakers must act now.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title, Organization, Contact Info]

To unsubscribe from this list serve please email the Public Policy Office at publicpolicy@ncadv.org with "UNSUBSCRIBE" in the subject line.

The Public Policy Office of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence (NCADV) is a national leader in the effort to create and influence Federal legislation that positively affects the lives of domestic violence victims and children. We work closely with advocates at the local, state and national level to identify the issues facing domestic violence victims, their children and the people who serve them and to develop a legislative agenda to address these issues. NCADV welcomes you to join us in our effort to end domestic violence

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