

# Public Policy Update

1633 Q St NW #210 · Washington, DC 20009  
(202) 745-1211 · Fax: (202) 745-0088 · [publicpolicy@ncadv.org](mailto:publicpolicy@ncadv.org)



**HELP REAUTHORIZE THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT!**

**CONTACT YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND URGE THEM TO  
REAUTHORIZE VAWA!**

**Your Senators and Representatives will be in their home districts meeting with constituents between August 1 and 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.**

Dear Domestic Violence Advocates,

As you know, Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) will expire in September, and NCADV needs your help to reauthorize this landmark piece of legislation. Originally passed in 1994 and reauthorized in 2000, VAWA programs have improved the criminal justice response to domestic violence and provided resources and protections to victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

Legislation to reauthorize VAWA has been introduced in both the House and Senate. It is critical that you contact your Members of Congress, and urge them to support the VAWA Reauthorization.

Below you will find tips for scheduling a meeting with your Legislator as well as contact information for your state's Senators and Representatives. Additionally, you will find other useful advocacy tools to assist you in generating support for VAWA.

We also encourage you to visit the VAWA 2005 website at [www.vawa2005.org](http://www.vawa2005.org) and [NCADV's VAWA 2005 Advocates' Action Guide](#) for updates on the bill status and other important information. Please feel free to contact us if you need additional information, have questions or would like to tell us about your efforts to reauthorize VAWA. You can reach the NCADV Public Policy Office at 202-745-1211 or at [publicpolicy@ncadv.org](mailto:publicpolicy@ncadv.org).

## **ACTION TIPS:**

*Please click the links below to jump to that section or scroll down the page for more information.*

[Meeting with your Legislator](#)  
[Violence against Women Talking Points](#)  
[Invite your Representatives to Public Events](#)  
[Call Your Legislator](#)  
[Sample Telephone Script](#)  
[Write or Fax Your Legislator](#)  
[Sample Letter](#)  
[Raise Awareness through the Media](#)  
[Sample Letter to the Editor](#)  
[Stay Informed](#)  
[Member of Congress Contact Information](#)

## **Meeting with your Legislator**

Face to face meetings with elected officials are the most effective way to communicate with your Legislator and impact his or her decision about an issue. The August recess from **August 1 – September 2** is a great opportunity for you to meet with your Legislators to encourage them to support VAWA. Legislators and their staff will be available for constituent meetings in their home district offices during this time.

- To **make an appointment**, call the district office and ask to speak to the scheduler. ([Contact information is listed at the end of this document.](#)) Identify yourself as a constituent and ask him or her to make an appointment for you to meet with that staff member handling the Violence Against Women Act. Keep in mind, it is unlikely that you will meet with the Senator or Representative. Instead, you will meet with a staff member handling VAWA, who will report to the Legislator.
- Before the meeting, **research your Legislator's position on VAWA**. If he or she is a co-sponsor of VAWA 2005, thank him or her for his or her support. You can check your Legislator's status as a cosponsor at <http://thomas.loc.gov>. Enter bill number S.1197 or H.R. 2876 in the search field. When the bill appears on the screen, click on the link "Bill Summary and Status File." This information is also provided on the [NCADV website](#).
- At your meeting, **introduce yourself and your organization**. Tell the staff member how many members your organization represents in that district or state.
- Clearly and briefly, **explain why VAWA is important to you, your program, and your community**. Provide written materials such as brochures, fact sheets, survivor testimonials, or local newspaper articles about domestic violence. NCADV's talking points (provided below) are a good outline for your discussion with the staff member as well.
- **Specifically ask for the Legislator to Co-Sponsor the VAWA reauthorization bill.**
- You do not have to be an expert on the legislation. If you do not know how to answer a question offer to gather the requested information. Feel free to contact the

NCADV Public Policy Office, and we will be glad to answer the question or follow up with the staffer on your behalf.

- Finally, **thank the Legislator or staff member for their time and send a thank you letter.** In the thank you letter, mention the name of the staff member and the issues you discussed. Make sure to include details of your conversation and offer your contact information if they would like to contact you in the future.

[Return to Action Tips Menu](#)

## **Violence Against Women Act Talking Points**

- The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) expires at the end of September *this year*, and the remarkable gains made in ending domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking could come to a halt if Congress does not reauthorize VAWA.
- During the past decade, VAWA has saved lives and helped millions of victims find safety, security, and self-sufficiency by providing funding, services and training to law enforcement officials, legal advocates, education programs, and prevention services.
- Studies show that over the past six years VAWA has saved over \$14 billion in averted social costs, which include direct property losses, medical and mental health care, law enforcement response, victim services, lost productivity, reduced quality of life, and death.
- We are now asking Congress to reauthorize and enhance existing VAWA programs and include new programs that better respond to community needs.

## **Invite your Representatives to Public Events**

Another way to meet with your Legislator during the August recess is to invite him or her to public events and discussions about domestic violence. Invite your Legislators to tour your facility and hold a press conference. Organize a town hall meeting to discuss domestic violence in your community and invite your Senators, Representative, and other community members. For more information on community organizing please see the [VAWA 2005 Grassroots Tool Kit](#).

[Return to Action Tips Menu](#)

## **Call Your Legislator**

Call your Legislators and urge them to support VAWA reauthorization. Call the local office and ask to speak to the staff member handling the Violence Against Women Act. [\(Contact information is listed at the end of this document.\)](#) When the staff member answers, or if you are transferred to voicemail, identify yourself as a constituent. Ask the Legislator to support VAWA reauthorization and briefly explain why VAWA is important to you, your program, and your community. Below is a sample telephone script.

### ***Sample Telephone Script***

“My name is <name>. I am a constituent, and I work at <shelter or program>. I urge <Senator or Representative’s name> to support the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act 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 and enhance 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 any additional information please feel free to contact me at <phone number>. Thank you.”

[Return to Action Tips Menu](#)

### **Write or Fax Your Legislator**

You may also write, fax, or e-mail a letter to your Legislators. A personalized letter is especially effective because it shows how VAWA impacts your local community and demonstrates the necessity of reauthorization. Below is a sample letter that you can personalize. Remember to insert statistics, such as the number of victims served or turned away because of the lack of resources. Include relevant newspaper articles, information about the specific services and programs you provide, personal stories from survivors, and anecdotes about your community’s needs. Keep your letter brief.

### ***Sample Letter***

The Honorable [*Senator/Representative’s Name*]  
United States [*Senate/House of Representatives*]

Dear [*Senator’s/Representative’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) programs. VAWA programs such as the National Domestic Violence Hotline and increased trainings for police, prosecutors and court officials have all contributed to saving the lives of domestic violence survivors and their children 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.

In recent years the success of these programs has resulted in a growing demand for services, with more victims and their children being

referred to agencies every day. However, this September VAWA will expire. 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 ending 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 through S. 1197 and H.R. 2876, 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 victims and children find safety, security and self-sufficiency.

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

Sincerely  
*Your name and organization*

[Return to Action Tips Menu](#)

## **Raise Awareness through the Media**

Media is a powerful tool that can be used to further raise awareness about VAWA reauthorization. There are several ways to raise awareness. You can issue press releases - especially if you host a town hall meeting or to announce your Legislator's tour of your facility. You may also write a letter to the editor. Contact your local newspaper for its editorial policies. Most newspapers allow a maximum word count of 300. Include your contact information and daytime phone number so the paper can confirm that you submitted the letter. (The newspaper will not print your phone number.) Below is a sample letter to the editor. For more [Media Awareness tools, please click here](#).

### ***Sample Letter to the Editor***

To The Editor:

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was just introduced in Congress with bipartisan support. Lawmakers have no higher priority

than to ensure that this essential legislation is reauthorized this year, to help stop domestic and sexual violence.

First passed in 1994, VAWA was a giant step forward. Its passage meant that we acknowledged that domestic and sexual violence cause tremendous harm to our families and our communities. VAWA also provided resources into helping victims and prosecuting offenders. Our communities are better off as a result.

In 2000, Congress reauthorized VAWA, continuing this work and adding important services for immigrant, rural, disabled and older victims of violence. But there is still work to do. On average, three women are killed in this country each day by their husbands or boyfriends, as the result of domestic violence. More than 700 women are raped or sexually assaulted each day in our country. Unfortunately 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 will strengthen families and keep our communities safe. Lawmakers must act now.

Sincerely,

[Name, Title, Organization, Contact Info]

[Return to Action Tips Menu](#)

## **Stay Informed**

Sign up for NCADV public policy e-mail alerts to stay up to date on the latest news on VAWA and other important domestic violence legislation. To receive the alerts, sign up for NCADV's list serve by e-mailing [publicpolicy@ncadv.org](mailto:publicpolicy@ncadv.org). Visit the NCADV website at [www.ncadv.org](http://www.ncadv.org) to read updates on VAWA reauthorization and to learn more about this organization. Additionally, visit the National Taskforce to End Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault website at [www.vawa2005.org](http://www.vawa2005.org) to learn more about the history of VAWA, read fact sheets on VAWA 2005 titles, and receive more information on how you can help us ensure VAWA reauthorization.

## **Member of Congress Contact Information**

To find your Member's contact information and district office location, visit [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov), [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov), or [www.congress.org](http://www.congress.org).

[Return to Action Tips Menu](#)