

# 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.

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## Action Alert:

**Contact your Representative and ask them to protect victims of domestic violence by co-sponsoring the SHIELD Act.**

Last week, [Representative Gwen Moore \(D-WI\)](#) and [Rep. Katherine Harris \(R-FL\)](#) introduced the [SHIELD Act \(HR 2695\)](#) designed to protect confidential information supplied by domestic violence victims receiving services at domestic violence shelters funded by Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

In July, 2004, HUD removed the Domestic Violence Exemption in the Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS), despite acknowledging that providing such information may place domestic violence victims at risk for being identified and located by an abuser. This measure required all domestic violence shelters, transitional housing services, and emergency homeless shelters receiving HUD funding to report victim confidential information, including name and social security number, to a national database.

In October, 2004, HUD clarified the final standards, allowing domestic violence shelters to withhold names and social security numbers, but still requiring shelters to provide each victim's date of birth, zip code, and gender. Under the current standards,

programs that refuse to provide this information to the national database risk losing critical HUD funding.

The SHIELD Act would exempt the personal information of domestic violence victims from being inputted into HMIS. The Act requires victims to sign a written informed consent before their personal data is submitted to the national database. If victims elect not to sign a consent form, their personal information cannot be submitted to the national database. Personally identifying information includes first and last name; home or other physical address; email address or other online contact; telephone number; a social security number; IP address; persistent identifier; or any other information including grade point average, date of birth, academic or occupational interests, athletic or extracurricular interests, racial or ethnic background, or religious information that would serve to identify the individual. Instead, shelters will provide non-personally identifying information to comply with the HMIS data collection requirements. To read the Shield Act Dear Colleague Letter, [click here](#).

**NCADV encourages you to Contact your Representative and ask them to protect victims of domestic violence by co-sponsoring the SHIELD Act.** You may contact your Representative by calling the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121, or by visiting <http://www.house.gov>. If your Representative is on the House Financial Services Committee, your call is particularly important ([click here for a list of committee members](#)).

## Legislation Update

**House and Senate Take Steps to Save VOCA Fund:** Last week both the House and Senate took initial steps to save the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding from being rescinded as requested by OMB and President Bush. The House [Subcommittee on Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies](#) marked up the FY 2006 budget proposals and did not include the \$1.2 billion rescission from the **Crime Victims Fund**. In the Senate, [Senator Cornyn \(R-TX\)](#) was successful in striking a line from the Transportation bill that would have directed money from VOCA to states for highway and transit programs. This means that should the amendment stay intact during conference committee, the VOCA Fund will remain a resource for victims of violent crime. VOCA is the single largest funding source for states to provide services to victims of all types of crimes. Started in 1984 by President Reagan, VOCA has helped over 4,400 local agencies from all 50 states serve over 3.8 million crime victims each year. VOCA funds consist of fines and penalties collected from federal offenders, not money collected from taxpayers. [Click here to download a Sample Letter to your Member of Congress supporting VOCA](#). For more information on the status of VOCA funds please visit the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators ([www.navaa.org](http://www.navaa.org)).

**Appropriations:** Last week the House Appropriations [Subcommittee on Science, the Departments of State, Justice, and Commerce, and Related Agencies](#) began marking up their FY 2006 budget. The budget provides \$387 million for violence against women prevention and prosecution programs and \$177 million to eliminate DNA analysis

backlogs. No additional details have been made available of the levels of funding outlined for the individual programs. [Please see NCADV's Public Policy website for a chart of previous years' funding levels compared to the President's budget recommendations.](#) This chart will be updated when the House and Senate introduce their appropriations bills.

In February, President Bush released his budget recommendations for FY 2006. Although, there were a few small cuts and some small increases to several VAWA and HHS programs, the President's budget recommendations fall short of the 2000 Congressional Authorization levels. To download a sample letter to your Member of Congress discussing the importance of full funding for violence against women programs, [click here.](#)

**Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization:** This September VAWA will expire. NCADV, a member of the [National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women](#), has participated in the VAWA reauthorization drafting process and has met extensively with Members of Congress to discuss VAWA reauthorization. Although no House or Senate reauthorization bill has been introduced, we are hoping to have a bill introduced towards the beginning of June. NCADV will soon send VAWA reauthorization action alerts, legislative action guides, fact sheets, sample letters and other pertinent information to our Public Policy list serve as soon as it becomes available. We will also post information on our [website](#). We also encourage you to check out the National Task Force website at [www.vawa2005.org](http://www.vawa2005.org). In the meantime, we strongly encourage you to contact your Members of Congress and other local community allies to stress the importance of VAWA reauthorization!

**McCain Tribal Bill:** On May 10, 2005, [Senator McCain \(R-AZ\)](#) and co-sponsor [Senator Dorgan \(D-ND\)](#) introduced the [Restoring Safety to Indian Women Act \(S 987\)](#) to address domestic violence in Indian Country. This legislation would address the specific obstacles that impede the investigation and prosecution of domestic violence on tribal lands. This bill creates a new federal offense aimed at repeat domestic violence offenders, which allows tribal court convictions to count for purposes of federal felony prosecution when the perpetrator has at least two separate federal, state or tribal convictions for crimes involving assault, sexual abuse or a violent felony against a spouse or intimate partner. It authorizes the creation of tribal criminal history databases to document domestic violence convictions and protection orders for use by all law enforcement. The legislation authorizes federal and tribal officers to make arrests for domestic violence assaults committed outside of their presence, and would authorize a comprehensive study of domestic violence in Indian Country to determine the scope of domestic violence problem in Indian Country. [Click here](#) to learn more.

## **In the News:**

[A recent national survey by Family Circle and Lifetime Television on violence in the home](#) found that 92% of individuals believe that family violence is a much greater problem than most believe. The survey also found that 96% of adults believe verbal abuse can cause as much damage as physical abuse. Family Circle Editor-in-Chief Susan Ungaro believes that, "Americans are beginning to realize that family violence is a

serious social problem, and also a crime." However, the survey also found men were more accepting of physical violence. Only 67% of men believe that there is no excuse for hitting another person compared with 83% of women. While 94% of women responded that they would be greatly upset to see a man mistreat a woman, only 81% of men agreed. Meredith Wagner of Lifetime Television explains that: "Family violence is an issue that seems to be at an important tipping point, no longer shrouded in secrecy and shame. But this survey also shows that we still need to increase awareness and enlist more women and men to help stop all forms of violence." [To read the complete survey](#), check out the June 14th issue of Family Circle.

On May 11, the Supreme Court of Texas and the Texas Access to Justice Commission introduced a free Spanish-language self-help Protective Order Kit. This kit enables Spanish-speaking victims of domestic violence to obtain court-ordered protection on their own. Texas Attorney General Greg Abbott explains that the kit "empowers victims to file their own court papers and get out of danger as quickly as possible." The kit will be distributed in hard copy and on CD to law enforcement agencies, domestic violence shelters, medical facilities, court clerks and public libraries. The Protective Order Kit may also be downloaded at <http://www.TexasLawHelp.org>.

## Coming Events:

"Imagine a single day where women and men, teenage girls and boys, grandmothers and grandsons turn to each other and actually talk about a problem that is more common than breast cancer and more insidious than AIDS. A problem that by its nature, makes people uncomfortable: domestic violence." *Marie Claire* and Liz Claiborne Inc. have designated **October 14 It's Time to Talk Day** to raise awareness on domestic violence. Email [itstimetotalk@liz.com](mailto:itstimetotalk@liz.com) to get involved.

## From Our Denver Office:

**Job Announcement: Development Director** The NCADV Denver office is seeking an energetic and experienced team member for a one-person development department. Ability to handle multiple tasks and deadlines and experience with successful grant writing, corporate philanthropy, and individual donors required. Experience working with fundraising and word processing software required. Small staff of committed and fun women, excellent benefits, some travel required and salary range of \$45,000-50,000. Visit [NCADV](#) for more details. Deadline June 6, 2005

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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 effects the lives of domestic violence victims. We work closely with advocates at the local, state and national level to identify the issues facing battered victims, their

children and the people who serve them and to develop a legislative agenda to address these issues.

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