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Press Release

Senator Biden Opposes President's Plan to Restructure Funding for Domestic Violence Programs

Washington, DC – Last week, President Bush unveiled his budget priorities for 2008, which included possible changes to domestic violence funding, putting at risk essential programs and services for victims of abuse across the country. Specifically, the Administration's budget makes a radical proposal to collapse over 20 separate Violence Against Women Act programs into one "consolidated competitive grant program," that would force individual victim service organizations, police, prosecutors, judges, tribal governments and states to compete for funding from the federal government. The Administration's proposal would strip away critical, guaranteed funding to states through the Act's cornerstone provision – the STOP (Services, Training, Officers, Prosecutors) grant program. Forcing state governments to compete for limited funding may leave life-saving victim programs without resources and may jeopardize judicial and law enforcement improvements that hold abusers accountable.

Senator Biden issued the following statement opposing the President's plan:

"There is no doubt that we have made tremendous progress battling domestic violence in the past decade – we took what was once a dirty little secret no one talked about out of the closet and made its eradication a national priority. But we cannot let our attention lapse or allow our spending priorities to become misplaced. Everyday women, children and sometimes men, in Delaware and across the nation live in fear in their own homes

"Since the passage of the Violence Against Women Act in 1994, Congress, police, judges, prosecutors, non-profit organizations and many others have made great strides in preventing domestic violence, helping victims and their families, and prosecuting abusers. Unfortunately, the President's plan to restructure funding for domestic violence programs puts all of our hard work in serious jeopardy.

"Under the President's new budget, those on the front lines of this battle will now have to fight for resources to continue their work. This is doubly true for many new programs created in the Violence Against Women Act of 2005 – such as a badly-needed sexual assault services program and a judicial program for teenage victims of domestic violence.

"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 is the author of the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which was signed into law in 1994. Since that time, VAWA has provided over \$4 billion dollars to combat domestic violence and sexual assault nationwide. The Violence Against Women Act's programs range from policies to encourage the prosecution of abusers, to victims' services to prevention programs. VAWA helped forge new alliances

between police officers and victim advocates. Ten years after the Act's passage Senator Biden's passion and commitment to ending domestic and sexual violence remains unwavering. Senator Biden also authored the Violence Against Women Act of 2005, legislation that rejuvenated core programs, made targeted improvements, and responsibly expanded the Act to reach the needs of America's families. The measure passed the Senate unanimously and was signed into law on January 5, 2006.

In addition, Senator Biden remains committed to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, an entity created in the Violence Against Women Act of 1994. In March 2004, he began an innovative private/public partnership to improve the computer and telephone technology at the National Domestic Violence Hotline based in Austin, Texas. Senator Biden enlisted the participation of America's major technology companies and asked them to transform the Hotline into a 21st century call center. Named the "Connections Campaign," Senator Biden's effort created over \$3 million in cash and in-kind equipment donations to the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

For more information about Sen. Biden's work to combat domestic violence, please visit:
<http://biden.senate.gov/>

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