

Op-ed template

It is Time to Move Beyond Statistics and Reauthorize VAWA with Vital Enhancements - [*Your name and, if applicable, title and organization*]

The statistics are staggering. [*Choose one or more statistic:*

- *One in five women and one in 59 men are raped in their lifetimes;*
- *One in four women and one in seven men experience severe physical abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetimes;*
- *One in six women and one in nineteen men experience stalking in their lifetimes;*
- *A woman is murdered by a male intimate partner with a gun every sixteen hours;*
- *Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking disproportionately impact women and members of underserved communities.]*

Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking; they fill emergency rooms and morgues, impede employees' ability to work, terrorize children, and interfere with their ability to learn. They drive up health care costs, contribute to crime on our streets, lead to poverty and homelessness, and cause lasting harm to families and communities. While the numbers tell a national story, these are not just statistics - these are your friends, your family, your neighbors, and members of your community.

Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking ("the four crimes") are pervasive problems in our society. They affect us all - they are all of our business. Recognizing this, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act ("VAWA") in 1994 to improve the nation's response to the four crimes. Like most other federal grant programs, VAWA grants must be reauthorized every five years and has been reauthorized three times since its inception, in 2000, 2005, and 2013. Each reauthorization made vital improvements to previous law.

[Direct service providers/advocates explain the services your organization provides and the difference VAWA has made to your clients; individuals explain why you are passionate about VAWA and, if applicable, how it has helped you.]

The time is upon us to reauthorize VAWA again - VAWA's authorization lapsed in mid-February. As in years past, this reauthorization must be responsive to the needs of victims and survivors. H.R.1585, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019, passed the House of Representatives with strong bipartisan support. This bill, based on extensive consultation with victim service providers, prosecutors, law enforcement, and other experts, preserves previous gains and improves current law to better meet the needs of victims and survivors of domestic violence. It invests in prevention. It increases access to justice and safety for Native women. It ensures victims of all forms of domestic violence have access to services. It reduces revictimization by the criminal justice system. It improves survivors' access to safe

housing. It protects victims and survivors from armed abusers and stalkers. It helps them rebuild their lives.

It's time – way past time – to do much more to stop this violence and to protect our communities. That means reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act with meaningful improvements that enhance our nation's response to these heinous crimes. That means moving forward - never backwards and never remaining static.

Now more than ever, we need Congress to make it a priority to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act with the vital enhancements encapsulated in H.R.1585 – essential legislation that authorizes funding for coordinated community responses, victim services, housing, prevention programs, and other critically needed community services. Stopping domestic and sexual violence and stalking and protecting victims must be a priority in our city, our state, and our country. There's no time to waste. I call on Senators [*your Senators' names*] and all of Congress to support a Senate bill substantially similar to H.R.1585 - your constituents are counting on you to do the right thing!