What happens if VAWA isn’t renewed before it “expires?”

This is a watershed moment. Women across the country are calling for accountability and change. They have been standing up, speaking out, marching, and voting in record numbers to say enough. The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (NTF) and our supporters across the nation says it’s time for Congress to get serious about ending violence against women. And Congress can do this by reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) with meaningful improvements.

Congress cannot simply change the dates on the existing funding in VAWA. Survivors are demanding more. Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act needs to increase investments in evidence-based prevention and enhance survivors’ access to safety and justice. Legislation has been introduced in the House that would do this. Now is not the time to back down.

VAWA grant programs were last reauthorized in 2013 for a five year period, ending Sept. 30, 2018. The Fiscal Year 2019 continuing resolution extended VAWA’s authorization until December 7th. While the goal is to reauthorize VAWA before it expires, we recognize that VAWA is a complex bill and Congress may not have sufficient time to pass a bipartisan bill with the necessary improvements before the expiration date. In order to ensure the resulting bill improves investments in prevention and includes enhancements to better meet the identified needs of victims and survivors, a limited delay in reauthorizing VAWA is acceptable.

Some VAWA programs and services have been funded for Fiscal Year 2019 in already-passed appropriations bills and the balance are included in the continuing resolution currently funding the rest of the government. Because both VAWA and the continuing resolution expire simultaneously, VAWA will be funded for the length of the next spending bill once a new spending bill is passed funding DOJ programs. For the time being, VAWA funding is not under threat.

As with other laws, only the VAWA grant program authorizations expire - the underlying law and all the provisions that are not tied to specific funding levels do not expire. All legal protections for victims and survivors continue, including protections in federally-subsidized housing, special tribal jurisdiction, and protections for immigrant victims. Grant conditions that protect survivor confidentiality and safety remain intact. Also as with other laws, appropriators can continue to fund VAWA without authorization while Congress works toward passing a reauthorization that clearly centers survivors and improves access to justice and safety.

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