



# SENATOR HARRY REID, MAJORITY LEADER

## THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT (S. 47)



*Since 1994, when I was a cosponsor of the original Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), I have continued to support VAWA each time it has been reauthorized and have consistently pushed for more funding for VAWA programs. In April 2012, I was proud to have led the Senate in passing the VAWA Reauthorization Act. But despite the overwhelming evidence that this bipartisan legislation saves lives and protects women, House Republicans used procedural tactics to block its reauthorization last Congress. Recently, on February 12, 2013, I brought an updated version of the VAWA Reauthorization Act for a vote in the Senate and it passed on a bipartisan basis with the support of 78 Senators. I was very pleased when the House Republican leadership finally brought the Senate's bipartisan VAWA bill to the House floor for a vote on February 28, 2013, where it passed by a vote of 286—138.*

*The original VAWA legislation was enacted in response to the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence and the significant impact of such violence in the lives of women. Like each previous renewal, the VAWA Reauthorization Act of 2013 enhances protections in ways that reflect the ever-changing nature of domestic violence and varied needs of survivors. This critical legislation:*

**Reauthorizes Key Grant Programs That Keep Victims Safe and Hold Perpetrators Accountable:** The VAWA bill reauthorizes the following programs designed to keep women and families safe from domestic violence:

- **STOP Grant Program:** VAWA's primary grant program seeks to improve the criminal justice system's response to violent crimes against women. It encourages development of effective law enforcement and prosecution strategies in cases involving violent crimes against women.
- **Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforce Protection Orders Grant Program (Arrest):** This critical program has successfully led to the creation of criminal rape statutes in every state by encouraging state and local law enforcement officials and court officers to treat domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking as serious criminal acts.
- **Transitional Housing Assistance Grant Program:** Provides transitional housing services to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault with a focus toward permanent housing.
- **Legal Assistance for Victims Grant Program:** Provides legal assistance to victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.
- **Youth Prevention Grant Program:** Funds programs designed to respond to the needs of youth who are victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, or stalking.

### KEY FACTS

- **Since its Passage in 1994, VAWA Has Reduced Domestic Violence by More Than 50 Percent.** [U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (Sept. 2009) Criminal Victimization, 2008.]
- **VAWA Consolidation and Restructuring Saves \$135 Million A Year and \$682.5 Million Over The 5-Year Authorization.** No existing VAWA-funded program will receive increased funding under this reauthorization. In fact, the \$135 million annual reduction in spending (\$682.5 million over the authorization period) amounts to a 17 percent decrease from the last VAWA reauthorization.
- **VAWA's Protections and Services Should be Available to All Americans.** Studies show that LGBT victims experience sexual assault and domestic violence in 25-33 percent of relationships, the same rate as the general population. However, nearly half of all LGBT victims seeking help were turned away from domestic violence shelters and over half who sought protective orders were denied. [NCVC and NCAVP, 3/10; NCAVP, 2011]
- **Expanded Jurisdiction For Tribal Lands Was Designed With the Department of Justice Over Several Years Of Consultation.** Neither the U.S. nor any State would lose any criminal jurisdiction as a result of this provision.

**Increases Focus on Sexual Assault Prevention and Response:** The reporting, prosecution, and conviction rates for sexual assault are among the lowest for any violent crime. This reauthorization places greater emphasis on training for law enforcement and forensic response to sexual assault in order to build cases that result in conviction. Modifications to the STOP and Arrest Grant programs will allow grant funding to be used in ways that are more directly responsive to the needs of sexual assault victims. For example, updates will help law enforcement to better respond to victims of sexual assault through improved training and creation of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner programs, Forensic Examiner programs, and Sexual Assault Response Teams. These modifications will help reduce the estimated 180,000 to 400,000 rape kits nationwide that remain untested.

[Associated Press, 03/19/2012]

**Provides Uniform Non-Discrimination Protection For All Victims:** Currently, there are significant differences in the level of anti-discrimination protections among VAWA programs due to the various statutes under which the grants were authorized. This reauthorization creates uniformity so that a grantee may not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, or disability.

**Protects Native American Women From Domestic Violence:** For Native American women, the rate of domestic violence far exceeds the national average. Currently, prosecution of non-Indian offenders is left to federal law enforcement who may be hours away and lack the capacity to address domestic violence. As a result non-Indian offenders largely go unpunished. This reauthorization provides tribes special domestic-violence criminal jurisdiction to hold non-Indian offenders accountable in very limited circumstances. It grants concurrent jurisdiction to investigate, prosecute, convict, and sentence persons who assault Indian spouses, intimate partners, or dating partners, or who violate protection orders, in Indian country. It also clarifies the intent of current law, namely that tribal courts have full civil jurisdiction to issue and enforce certain protection orders involving any persons, Indian or non-Indian.

**Expanded Protection for Immigrant Victims:** This bill builds upon prior VAWA reauthorizations by protecting the children of immigrant domestic violence and sexual assault victims and strengthening protections for women brought into the country illegally by marriage brokers.

**Reduces Bureaucracy and Wasteful Spending:** This reauthorization consolidates 13 programs into only four by reducing bureaucratic duplication, saving \$135 million a year and \$682.5 million over the 5-year authorization period.

**Implements New Accountability Measures To Ensure Federal Dollars Are Properly Spent:** This reauthorization authorizes the Department of Justice's Inspector General to audit VAWA grantees for instances of waste, fraud, and abuse. It provides the Inspector General with flexibility in addressing programming problems, but imposes stiff penalties on grantees that refuse to address those problems. It also supports new monitoring efforts implemented by the Office on Violence Against Women.

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