Domestic Violence Victim Advocates Reflect on Women?s Equality Day

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This Sunday, August 26, is Women's Equality Day, the day women were guaranteed the right to vote through passage of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Advocates for victims of domestic violence say the day is an appropriate time to consider both the progress made towards ending violence against women and the fact this social problem continues to seriously impact the lives of women and girls.

"In the span of a few generations, we have made remarkable strides towards the goal of women's equality," said Patti Seger, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV). "It's amazing to think women alive today were born at a time when their mothers' did not have the right to vote. While the progress is significant, we still live in an unequal society, and violence against women remains both a source and reflection of that underlying inequality."

While domestic violence affects both women and men, women are overwhelmingly the victims of violence in intimate partner relationships. Women are four times more likely than men to be beaten, six times more likely to be slammed against something and nine times more likely to be strangled or suffocated by an intimate partner. A woman is much more likely to be the victim of a domestic violence homicide than a man. Sexual violence and stalking are also crimes that are largely directed at women.

"The drive for women's full equality requires that we continue to work for a world in which all young people—but especially our daughters—do not need to be worried about being abused by someone who claims to love them, a world in which women do not give a second thought for their safety when on a date, at a party or out alone at night," continued Seger.

Seger says there are tangible steps our leaders can take to achieve this goal.

"Like the broader movement for women's equality, the anti-violence against women movement has taken huge steps forward, but similarly, there also continue to be setbacks. Eighteen years after its original passage, the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is stuck in Congress. Quickly passing a VAWA reauthorization that protects all victims would be an important achievement and put us back on track to eliminating gender-based violence in America," Seger concluded.

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