Wisconsin Victim Advocates Support Re-authorization of the Violence Against Women Act

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(Madison)—Yesterday, Senators Leahy (D-VT) and Crapo (R-ID) introduced a bipartisan bill to re-authorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA is at the heart of the national effort to reduce and eliminate domestic and sexual violence. Victim advocates in Wisconsin expressed excitement for the bill's introduction and hope that Congress would act quickly to renew VAWA.

"Since the original passage in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act has fostered and supported multi-pronged strategies to serve victims and hold perpetrators accountable," said Patti Seger, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV). "VAWA improves the response of police, prosecutors and courts in Wisconsin and across the country. It also provides investment in services that keep victims safe and prevent further crimes."

Supporters stress that VAWA is even more needed in times of economic instability.

"Studies have shown that for every dollar we invest in VAWA, we save almost ten dollars in prevented costs, including health care and law enforcement expenditures," said Seger. "In these times of stretched budgets for basic government services, it is more important than ever to renew our commitment to proven, highly cost-effective programs—like VAWA—that save lives and money."

Proponents also say the need for VAWA is high. One in every four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime. Over fifteen million children are exposed to violence annually, and one in six women and one in 33 men have experienced an attempted or completed rape.

"Domestic and sexual violence are epidemics in the U.S.," said Seger.

"We are thankful that Senators Leahy and Crapo are leading the effort to re-authorize VAWA so that we can build off of the good work that has already been done. We call on all their colleagues to join them," concluded Seger.

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