

Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III
President

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION

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January 31, 2012

The Honorable Patrick J. Leahy
437 Russell Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Leahy and Ranking Member Grassley:

We understand that the Committee may soon consider S. 1925, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2011. I write on behalf of the American Bar Association to express our strong support for S. 1925 and to urge its prompt approval by the Judiciary Committee.

The Violence Against Women Act was an effective response by Congress in 1994 to the devastating effects of domestic and sexual violence. The act has evolved from a small criminal justice initiative to a multidisciplinary federal effort to address the needs of women, men and children threatened by domestic and sexual violence. Policies and programs supported and inspired by the act have been credited with providing lifesaving assistance to hundreds of thousands of victims. Incentives in the act also have encouraged the states to address the problem more assertively.

Congress reauthorized VAWA in 2000 and again in 2005. Now the American Bar Association and other groups are urging Congress once more to reauthorize the act. VAWA has been the single most effective federal effort to respond to the epidemic of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking in this country. The act has ensured that legal and social services are available to survivors, and that law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, attorneys and advocates are well-trained and equipped with cutting-edge resources to effectively address these crimes in their own communities.

In January of this year, 53 Attorneys General signed a joint letter to Congress expressing their support for VAWA and urging Congress to reauthorize this critical piece of legislation. Hundreds of local programs, faith groups, state coalitions and others have signed similar letters, urging swift reauthorization and supporting the current Senate bill.

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Recent studies support arguments for reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act. According to a U.S. Justice Department report, for instance, the number of women killed by intimate partners decreased by 35 percent between 1993 (the year before the act's passage) and 2008, and nonfatal violent acts against women by intimate partners decreased by 53 percent. During the same period, the number of men killed by intimate partners decreased by 46 percent, and the number of nonfatal violent acts against men by intimate partners dropped by 54 percent. Other studies indicate that incidents of domestic and sexual violence tend to go down when victims have legal representation and when they obtain protection orders.

Nevertheless, the United States still has a long way to go. According to a CDC study released in December, nearly 1 in 5 women and 1 in 71 men in the United States have been raped at some time in their lives. One in 6 women and 1 in 19 men have experienced stalking victimization at some point during their lifetime in which they felt very fearful or believed that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed. And about 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime.

VAWA is a critical tool in the arsenal to address domestic and sexual violence. One study found that in 86% of cases where a victim received a protection order, the abuse stopped or was greatly reduced. Another found that half of victims who obtained a protection order experienced no violations of the order in the following 6 months. For those victims who did experience violations, every type of violence and abuse was reduced significantly during the 6 month follow-up period. A 2010 study demonstrated that an increase in the availability of legal services is associated with a decrease in intimate partner homicide.

VAWA has become an integral part of our public safety strategy that has empirical support for its effectiveness. The good work being done by thousands of local providers and public servants cannot continue without its reauthorization. We strongly urge the Members of the Judiciary Committee to favorably report S. 1925 so that it may soon be considered by the full Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Wm. T. Robinson III", enclosed within a large, loopy circular flourish.

Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III

Enclosure

cc: Members of the Committee
Sen. Michael D. Crapo



PRESIDENT
Rob McKenna

Washington Attorney General

PRESIDENT-ELECT
Doug Gansler

Maryland Attorney General

VICE PRESIDENT
J.B. Van Hollen

Wisconsin Attorney General

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT
Roy Cooper

North Carolina Attorney General

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
James McPherson

January 11, 2012

Dear Members of Congress,

Since its passage in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) has shined a bright light on domestic violence, bringing the issue out of the shadows and into the forefront of our efforts to protect women and families. VAWA transformed the response to domestic violence at the local, state and federal level. Its successes have been dramatic, with the annual incidence of domestic violence falling by more than 50 percent¹.

Even though the advancements made since in 1994 have been significant, a tremendous amount of work remains and we believe it is critical that the Congress reauthorize VAWA. Every day in this country, abusive husbands or partners kill three women, and for every victim killed, there are nine more who narrowly escape that fate². We see this realized in our home states every day. Earlier this year in Delaware, three children – ages 12, 2 ½ and 1 ½ – watched their mother be beaten to death by her ex-boyfriend on a sidewalk. In Maine last summer, an abusive husband subject to a protective order murdered his wife and two young children before taking his own life.

Reauthorizing VAWA will send a clear message that this country does not tolerate violence against women and show Congress’ commitment to reducing domestic violence, protecting women from sexual assault and securing justice for victims.

VAWA reauthorization will continue critical support for victim services and target three key areas where data shows we must focus our efforts in order to have the greatest impact:

- Domestic violence, dating violence, and sexual assault are most prevalent among young women aged 16-24, with studies showing that youth attitudes are still largely tolerant of violence, and that women abused in adolescence are more likely to be abused again as adults. VAWA reauthorization will help us break that cycle by consolidating and strengthening programs aimed at both prevention and intervention, with a particular emphasis on more effectively engaging men and local community-based resources in the process.

- A woman who has been sexually assaulted can be subjected to further distress when the healthcare, law enforcement, and legal response to her attack is not coordinated and productive. Whether it is a first responder without

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¹ U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (Sept. 2009) *Criminal Victimization, 2008*.

² Conversation between Lynn Rosenthal and with Jackie Campbell, May 2010.

adequate training, a rape kit that goes unprocessed for lack of funding, or a phone call between a crisis counselor and a prosecutor that never takes place, sexual assault victims deserve better. We must develop and implement best practices, training, and communication tools across disciplines in order to effectively prosecute and punish perpetrators, as well as help victims heal and rebuild their lives.


- There is a growing consensus among practitioners and researchers that domestic violence homicides are predictable and, therefore, often preventable. We can save the lives of untold numbers of potential homicide victims with better training for advocates, law enforcement, and others who interact with victims to recognize the warning signs and react meaningfully.

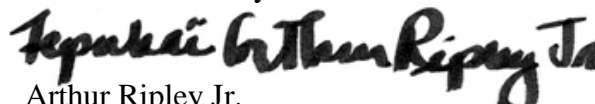
The fight to protect women from violence is one that never ends. It is not a year-to-year issue, which is why we think it is critical that Congress reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. We know a great deal more about domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking than we did 17 years ago. Reauthorizing VAWA will allow us to build on those lessons and continue to make progress and save lives.

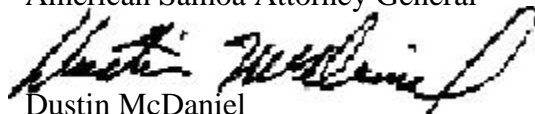
VAWA was last reauthorized in 2006 and time is of the essence for reauthorization of this important law. We urge Congress to take on this critical mission and reauthorize VAWA.

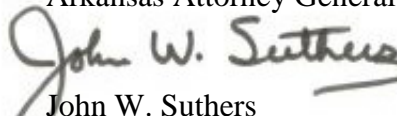
Thank you.


Sincerely,



Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III
Delaware Attorney General

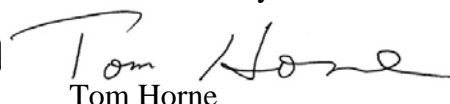

Arthur Ripley Jr.
American Samoa Attorney General



Dustin McDaniel
Arkansas Attorney General

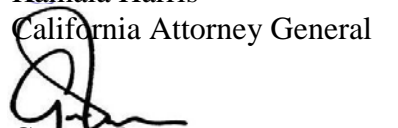

John W. Suthers
Colorado Attorney General

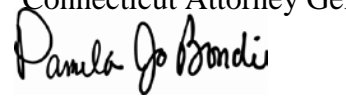

Irvin Nathan
Washington DC Attorney General


William J. Schneider
Maine Attorney General


Tom Horne
Arizona Attorney General


Kamala Harris
California Attorney General


George Jepsen
Connecticut Attorney General

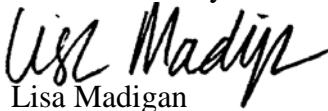

Pam Bondi
Florida Attorney General



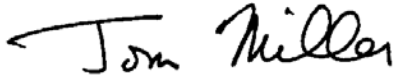
Sam Olens
Georgia Attorney General



David Louie
Hawaii Attorney General



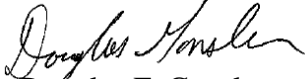
Lisa Madigan
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Tom Miller
Iowa Attorney General



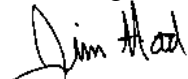
Jack Conway
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Douglas F. Gansler
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Bill Schuette
Michigan Attorney General



Jim Hood
Mississippi Attorney General



Steve Bullock
Montana Attorney General



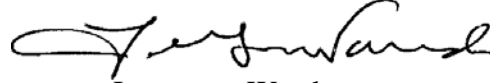
Catherine Cortez Masto
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New Jersey Attorney General



Lenny Rapadas
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Lawrence Wasden
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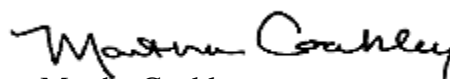
Greg Zoeller
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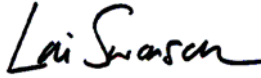
Derek Schmidt
Kansas Attorney General



James "Buddy" Caldwell
Louisiana Attorney General



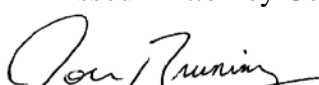
Martha Coakley
Massachusetts Attorney General



Lori Swanson
Minnesota Attorney General



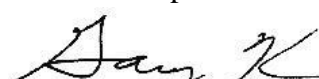
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