URGENT ACTION ALERT

DATE: April 3, 2019
TO: Concerned Parties
FROM: Hilary O. Shelton, Director, NAACP Washington Bureau

BILL TO REAUTHORIZE AND STRENGTHEN THE NAACP-SUPPORTED VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT (VAWA)
SCHEDULED FOR A VOTE BY THE FULL HOUSE 4-4-19

HALF-MEASURES SUCH AS A STRAIGHT REAUTHORIZATION ARE NOT ACCEPTABLE, NOR ARE ROLLBACKS OF EXISTING PROTECTIONS FOR SURVIVORS

THE ISSUE:

In 1994, President Bill Clinton signed the NAACP-supported Violence Against Woman Act (VAWA). VAWA is seen today as one of the most effective pieces of legislation enacted to end domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It has dramatically improved the law enforcement response to violence against women and has provided critical services necessary to support women in their struggle to overcome abusive situation. As originally written, VAWA authorized $1.6 billion toward the investigation and prosecution of violent crimes against women, imposed automatic and mandatory restitution on those convicted, and allowed civil redress in cases prosecutors chose to leave un-prosecuted. The Act also established the Office on Violence Against Women within the Department of Justice. VAWA was reauthorized and strengthened by strong bipartisan majorities in 2000, 2005, and 2013. Sadly, VAWA expired on February 15, 2019. Congresswoman Karen Bass (CA) and Congressman Brian Fitzpatrick (PA) have introduced H.R. 1585, the bipartisan Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019, and Senator Dianne Feinstein (CA) is expected to introduce companion legislation in the Senate this spring. This legislation not only gives necessary funding increases to VAWA programs, but it also makes modest yet vital enhancements to existing law, based on input from VAWA service providers as well as those who have benefitted from the program. Specifically, H.R. 1585: invests in prevention; ends impunity for non-Native perpetrators of sexual assault, child abuse co-occurring with domestic violence, stalking, sex trafficking, and assaults on tribal law enforcement officers on tribal lands; improves enforcement of court orders that require adjudicated domestic abusers to relinquish their firearms; improves access to housing for victims and survivors; protects victims of dating violence from firearm homicide; helps survivors gain and maintain economic independence; updates the federal definition of domestic violence for the purposes of VAWA grants only to acknowledge the full range of abuse victims suffer (does not impact the criminal definition of domestic violence); maintains existing protections for all survivors; and improves the healthcare system’s response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking.

H.R. 1585 is expected to be voted on by the full U.S. House tomorrow, 4-4-19. We need to pass it by a strong majority of Members to demonstrate our support for strengthening VAWA and protecting all survivors.

Half-measures such as a straight reauthorization of VAWA are not acceptable, nor are rollbacks of existing protections for survivors. We are at a crucial moment in the movement to end domestic and sexual violence. High profile stories of abuse and assault are bringing these topics to dinner tables across the country and inspiring some survivors to come forward. And when they ask for help? Programs and protections created by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) increase their access to safety and justice.

More...
THE ACTION WE NEED YOU TO TAKE:
Contact your Representative and both your Senators and URGE THEM TO SUPPORT A COMPREHENSIVE, AGGRESSIVE REAUTHORIZATION WHICH BUILDS ON THE SUCCESSES OF VAWA. To contact your Senators and Representative, you may:

✓ Make a Phone Call:
   Call your Senators and your Representative in Washington by dialing the Capitol Switchboard and asking to be transferred to your Senators'/Congressman’s offices. The switchboard phone number is (202) 224-3121 (see message section, below).

✓ Write a Letter
   To write letters to your Senators, send them to:
   The Honorable (name of Senator)
   U.S. Senate
   Washington, D.C.  20510
   To write a letter to your Representative, send it to:
   The Honorable (name of Representative)
   U.S. House of Representatives
   Washington, D.C.  20515

✓ Send a Fax
   If you would like to send a fax, call your Senators’ or Representative’s offices (through the Capitol switchboard) and ask for their fax numbers (you can use either the attached sample letter or the message box, below).

✓ Send an E-Mail
   To send an email to your Representative, go to www.house.gov, and on the home page click “Representatives”. This will allow you to click your Representative either by state or by name. Click on your Representative and you will be directed to his / her web page, which will have instructions on how to send an e-mail. The homepage of www.house.gov also has a tool to help you identify who your Representative is.
   To send an e-mail to your Senators, go to www.senate.gov and click on “Contact” under “Senators.” You can look up your Senators by name or state; go to their web sites to send an e-mail.

REMEMBER TO CONTACT BOTH YOUR SENATORS!!!!!!

THE MESSAGE

• VAWA is seen today as one of the most effective pieces of legislation enacted to end domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It has dramatically improved the law enforcement response to violence against women and has provided critical services necessary to support women in their struggle to overcome abusive situation.

• The bipartisan reauthorization legislation currently supported by the NAACP makes modest yet vital enhancements to existing law, based on input from service providers as well as victims and survivors who have benefitted from VAWA.

• Half-measures such as a straight reauthorization of VAWA are not acceptable, nor are rollbacks of existing protections for survivors

THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION TO THIS IMPORTANT MATTER!!!
If you have any questions, call Hilary Shelton at the Washington Bureau at (202) 463-2940.

MEMBERSHIP IS POWER!  JOIN THE NAACP TODAY.
To become an NAACP member or to sign up for e-mail legislative and press updates, visit www.naacp.org
The Honorable ___________________________
United States Senate / House of Representatives
Washington, D.C.  20510 / 20515

RE: STRONG SUPPORT FOR AN AGGRESSIVE REAUTHORIZATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT, H.R. 1585

Dear Senator / Representative ______________________________;

As your constituent, I strongly urge you to support H.R. 1585, and its Senate counterpart, which is an aggressive and much needed reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). We are at a crucial moment in the movement to end domestic and sexual violence. Half-measures such as a straight reauthorization of VAWA are not acceptable, nor are rollbacks of existing protections for survivors.

Today VAWA is seen as one of the most effective pieces of legislation enacted to end domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It has dramatically improved the law enforcement response to violence against women and has provided critical services necessary to support women in their struggle to overcome abusive situation. High profile stories of abuse and assault are bringing these topics to dinner tables across the country and inspiring some survivors to come forward. And when they ask for help? Programs and protections created by VAWA increase their access to safety and justice. We have come too far in our struggle to allow ourselves to go backwards.

H.R. 1585 is bipartisan legislation which makes modest yet common-sense and vital enhancements to existing law, based on input from service providers as well as victims and survivors who have benefitted from VAWA. Please do what you can to see this crucial bill enacted sooner rather than later, and I hope you will contact me to let me know what I can do to help.

Sincerely,

(sign and print your name and remember to include your address)

Remember to contact your Representative and BOTH your Senators.