



February 4, 2013

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VOTE YES on S. 47
Support S.47, the “Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013,”
and Oppose All Amendments

Dear Senator:

On behalf of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, a coalition charged by its diverse membership of more than 210 national organizations to promote and protect the civil and human rights of all persons in the United States, we urge you to support S.47, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (VAWA), and to vote against any amendments that would weaken this important legislation, including any amendments to impose mandatory minimum sentences for aggravated sexual abuse.

The Leadership Conference believes that the reauthorization of VAWA is critical for protecting the civil and human rights of American women to be free from domestic violence. These protections are especially important for women of color and Native American women, who experience the highest rates of domestic violence and sexual assault. Further, it is essential that these protections be extended to all instances of intimate partner violence, including for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. In short, S. 47 would strengthen our nation's ability to prosecute perpetrators of violence and provide protections to all victims.

While domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking occur in all parts of the nation and affect people of all backgrounds, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, these forms of violence and harassment disproportionately affect the communities represented by The Leadership Conference. For example, 37 percent of Hispanic women are victims; 43 percent of African-American women and 38 percent of African-American men are victims; and a staggering 46 percent of American Indian or Alaska Native women and 45 percent of American Indian or Alaska Native men experience intimate-partner victimization.¹

VAWA-funded programs have dramatically improved the national response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The annual incidence of domestic violence has decreased by more than 53 percent since VAWA became law in 1994 and reporting by victims has also increased by 51 percent. Not

¹ http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf

only do these comprehensive programs save lives, they also save money. In its first six years, VAWA saved \$12.6 billion in net averted social costs.

Yet, as law enforcement officers, service providers, and health care professionals have acknowledged, even with the successes of the current VAWA programs, there are significant gaps in current VAWA programs which, if addressed, could have a significant impact on diminishing the incidences of domestic violence in the United States. S.47 helps address these concerns by strengthening services for minority communities and expanding protections for underserved communities to include lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people. Further, S.47 addresses the crisis of violence against women in tribal communities by strengthening legal protections for Native victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. S.47 also includes important improvements to VAWA protections for immigrant victims. In addition, the bill provides new tools and training to prevent domestic violence homicides.

VAWA has provided for a coordinated approach, improving collaboration between law enforcement and victim services providers and supporting community-based responses and direct services for victims. As a result, victims' needs have been better met, perpetrators have been held accountable, communities have become safer, and progress has been made toward breaking the cycle and culture of violence within families. Without question, VAWA reauthorization is the key to ensuring that victims and survivors of violence have continued access to these critical services.

We look forward to working with you to swiftly adopt, without any weakening amendments S.47, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, and continue a strong federal response to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact June Zeitlin at 202-263-2852 or zeitlin@civilrights.org.

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AFL-CIO

AIDS United

Alaska Federation of Natives

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD)

American Association of University Women (AAUW)

American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO

American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), AFL-CIO

American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO

American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)

Anti-Defamation League

Asian American Justice Center, Member of Asian American Center for Advancing Justice

Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance

Asian Pacific American Legal Center, a member of the Asian American Center for Advancing Justice

Association of Flight Attendants - CWA

Association of Jewish Family & Children's Agencies
Center for Women's Global Leadership
Center for Women Policy Studies
CenterLink: The Community of LGBT Centers
Coalition on Human Needs
Communications Workers of America
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)
Disciples Home Missions & Family and Children's Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples
of Christ)
Family Equality Council
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN)
GetEQUAL
GlobalSolutions.org
Hip Hop Caucus
Human Rights Campaign
Institute for Science and Human Values, Inc.
International Center for Research on Women
Jewish Council for Public Affairs
Jewish Women International
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
Log Cabin Republicans
Maryknoll Sisters
NAACP
National Association of Human Rights Workers (NAHRW)
National Association of Social Workers
National Bar Association
National Black Justice Coalition
National Center for Lesbian Rights
National Center for Transgender Equality
National Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development
National Community Reinvestment Coalition
National Congress of American Indians
National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW)
National Council on Independent Living
National Education Association
National Employment Law Project
National Fair Housing Alliance
National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Action Fund
National Health Law Program
National Immigration Law Center
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
National Legal Aid and Defender Association
National Low Income Housing Coalition
National Partnership for Women & Families
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
People For the American Way
Planned Parenthood Federation of America
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Refugee Women's Network
Sealaska Heritage Institute
The Sentencing Project
Southern Poverty Law Center
Transgender Law Center
Union for Reform Judaism
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW)
US National Committee for UN Women
Women of Reform Judaism
Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO)
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, U.S. Section
The Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance