



Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

UNITED STATES SENATOR - DELAWARE

<http://www.senate.gov/~biden>



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CONTACT: Elizabeth Alexander (202) 224-5042

Sen. Biden Seeks to Increase Funding for Key Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Programs

Sen. Biden is the author of the landmark Violence Against Women Act

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Joseph R. Biden, Jr. (D-DE), the author of the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), introduced an amendment today to the FY 2008 Budget Resolution to increase funding for key VAWA programs. Although the Violence Against Women Act of 2005 was unanimously passed by Congress, funding has continuously been sub-par. According to government reports, one in every four women will experience domestic violence during her lifetime and one in every six women will suffer from an attempted or completed rape.

“There is no doubt that we have made tremendous progress battling domestic violence since the passage of the original Violence Against Women Act,” said Senator Biden. “We took what was once a dirty little secret no one talked about and made its eradication a national priority. But we cannot let our attention lapse or allow our spending priorities to become misplaced. Everyday women, children and sometimes men, in Delaware and across the nation still live in fear in their own homes. It is crucial that we continue to fund these key, successful programs and keep fighting domestic violence on the front lines.”

Senator Biden’s amendment would add \$100 million to the funding allocation for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) programs administered by the Department of Justice and the Department of Health and Human Services. Specifically, \$60 million would go towards VAWA programs administered under the Department of Justice and \$40 million would go towards VAWA programs administered under the Department of Health and Human Services. Senator Biden’s amendment will provide a serious and much-needed funding boost to programs that will train more police officers, judges, and prosecutors, expand transitional housing for victims, improve services for battered women in rural areas and Indian land, launch prevention programs aimed at boys and young men and much more.

The Violence Against Women Act of 2005 authorized slightly over \$1 billion for programs, yet in recent years appropriated spending has lingered at approximately \$557 million. The President’s FY 2008 budget proposes \$546.6 million in funding. Senator Biden’s amendment seeks to reinvigorate this critical funding stream for America’s broken families, and to ensure that Congress’ commitment to end domestic and sexual violence does not languish with flat funding levels.

To put the domestic violence epidemic in context, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has fielded over 215,220 callers in 2006 alone - an average of 4,138 calls a week. In addition, a newly released national survey by the National Network to End Domestic Violence found in just one 24-hour cycle,

over 5,000 pleas for services, be it emergency shelter, transitional housing or legal aid, were unmet because of a lack of resources.

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Sen. Biden is the author of the landmark Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which was signed into law in 1994. Since that time, VAWA has provided over \$4 billion dollars to combat domestic violence and sexual assault nationwide. The Violence Against Women Act's programs range from policies to encourage the prosecution of abusers, to victims' services to prevention programs.

VAWA helped forge new alliances between police officers and victim advocates. Ten years after the Act's passage Senator Biden's passion and commitment to ending domestic and sexual violence remains unwavering. Senator Biden also authored the Violence Against Women Act of 2005, legislation that rejuvenated core programs, made targeted improvements, and responsibly expanded the Act to reach the needs of America's families. The measure passed the Senate unanimously and was signed into law on January 5, 2006.

In addition, Senator Biden remains committed to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, an entity created in the Violence Against Women Act of 1994. In March 2004, he began an innovative private/public partnership to improve the computer and telephone technology at the National Domestic Violence Hotline based in Austin, Texas. Senator Biden enlisted the participation of America's major technology companies and asked them to transform the Hotline into a 21st century call center. Named the "Connections Campaign," Senator Biden's effort created over \$3 million in cash and in-kind equipment donations to the National Domestic Violence Hotline.

For more information about Sen. Biden's work to combat domestic violence, please visit:
<http://biden.senate.gov>.