

Increasing Domestic Violence Awareness -- October 2007

Throughout the month of October, local organizations, community leaders, and my colleagues in Congress are participating in activities to mark Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Cases of intimate partner violence, commonly known as domestic violence, are frighteningly common. In fact, nearly one-third of American women report physical or sexual abuse by a husband or boyfriend at some point in their lives, and approximately 5.3 million cases of domestic abuse by a man or woman occur each year. The Domestic Violence Coordinating Council estimated that there were over 28,000 domestic violence incidents here in Delaware in 2006 alone, with a number of these incidents resulting in serious injury or death. These statistics reflect the magnitude of this problem both locally and across the nation.

To address the high incidence of such crimes, Congress enacted legislation to combat domestic violence as well as Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) programs. Congress passed VAWA in 1994 to improve the law enforcement response to domestic violence and make urgently-needed services available to victims. It is imperative that we work to protect the rights of victims of domestic violence. For this reason, I supported legislation to reauthorize VAWA in 2006 to ensure the continuation of successful programs within the initial act, in addition to enhancing services for victims of sexual assault and improving programs that address health and prevention, among other essential issues. This July, the House passed H.R. 3093, the Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, which included an 11 percent increase for grants and programs under VAWA. The Senate must still consider its version before a final conference agreement is reached.

In addition, I voted in favor of an amendment to increase the amount of VOCA funding distributed to states for victim services. This amendment allows for an additional \$10 million to the VOCA fund to enable direct victim service programs to continue to receive the money they need to serve crime victims.

Most recently, I supported the passage of H.RES. 590, a resolution to express the goals and ideals of National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. This legislation is important to increasing the awareness of Congress and the nation about domestic violence and its devastating effects.

Although Congressional action is important to providing funding for vital domestic violence programs, decreasing the incidence of domestic violence would not be possible without coordination between local, state, and national groups. Raising awareness to this October will help reduce the impact of the victims of domestic abuse, both in Delaware and throughout the nation.

