



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1064-2011, Version: A

Res. No. 1064-A

Resolution calling upon the United States Congress to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

By Council Members Dromm, Ferreras, Barron, Brewer, Chin, Dickens, Gennaro, Jackson, James, Koppell, Koslowitz, Lander, Lappin, Mark-Viverito, Mealy, Mendez, Palma, Recchia Jr., Rose, Seabrook, Van Bramer, Vann, Williams, Nelson, Reyna, Arroyo, Gonzalez, Crowley, Garodnick, Rodriguez, Levin and Halloran

Whereas, Violence against women is committed on a daily basis and includes domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking; and

Whereas, This violence has an enormous emotional, physical and economic impact upon individuals, families and communities; and

Whereas, In a groundbreaking attempt to address such violence and its aftermath, the federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was first authorized in 1994; and

Whereas, According to a Congressional Research Service Report entitled *Violence Against Women Act: History and Federal Funding*, VAWA emphasizes funding of law enforcement efforts as well as educational and social programs to prevent crime; and

Whereas, The report further explains that VAWA funding is focused on helping state, local and Indian tribal governments to strengthen law enforcement; and

Whereas, In New York State, VAWA grants have been awarded for direct services provided by district attorneys, police departments, courts and victim services organizations; and

Whereas, Most of New York's Sexual Assault Examiner Programs are supported by federal VAWA funds, which are administered by the Division of Criminal Justice Services, Office of Program Development and Funding; and

Whereas, In addition, according to the New York State Coalition Against Domestic Violence, many City-based domestic violence programs receive funding through VAWA grants; and

Whereas, Most of New York City's domestic violence and sexual assault service providers are recipients of VAWA funding, including the New York City Family Justice Centers; and

Whereas, Despite improvements in services to combat violence against women, New York City continues to need such funding; and

Whereas, According to the Mayor's Office to Combat Domestic Violence, in 2011, the New York City Police Department (NYPD) responded to 257,813 domestic violence incidents, which is an average of over 700 incidents per day; and

Whereas, A 2007 study done by the NYC Alliance Against Sexual Assault reported that sexual violence is prevalent among youth in New York City and found that more than 1 in 6 students surveyed by the Alliance reported experiencing sexual violence at some point in their lives; and

Whereas, Unlike most crimes in New York City, rapes and sexual assaults have risen in the last year according to 2011 NYPD data; and

Whereas, VAWA redefined the way domestic violence and other forms of violence against women are handled by establishing funding streams for changes in law enforcement, improvements in the criminal justice system, and shelters and services for victims; and

Whereas, VAWA's concept of a coordinated community response that encourages collaboration between law enforcement, judicial personnel and the public and private sectors in order to address the needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking is considered to be one of its most vital achievements; and

Whereas, Notably, VAWA also increased public awareness about violence against women; and

Whereas, VAWA was reauthorized in both 2000 and 2005, and is currently again being considered for reauthorization; and

Whereas, Previous reauthorizations included amendments that strengthened VAWA in various ways, for

example by addressing and strengthening the protections afforded to immigrant victims of violence, improving confidentiality and broadening services to include children and teenagers; and

Whereas, On July 13, 2011, the United States Senate’s Judiciary Committee held a hearing entitled “The Violence Against Women Act: Building on Seventeen Years of Accomplishments”; and

Whereas, At that hearing numerous advocates noted the importance of continued support of VAWA and the valuable programs it supports; and

Whereas, According to the National Network to End Domestic Violence (NNEDV), “VAWA’s reauthorization should build upon its successes and continue progress towards breaking the cycle of violence”; and

Whereas, On November 30, 2011, S.1925, also known as the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2011, was introduced in the United States Senate, and on February 2, 2012, S.1925 was passed out of the Senate Judiciary Committee; and

Whereas, S.1925 would amend VAWA to add or expand certain definitions, including: (1) “culturally specific services” to mean community-based services that offer culturally relevant and linguistically specific services and resources to culturally specific communities and (2) “child” to mean a person who is under 11 years of age and “youth” to mean a person who is 11 to 24 years old; and

Whereas, S.1925 would also strengthen provisions for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) victims by clarifying that VAWA funds may be used for projects serving LGBTQ victims; and

Whereas, S.1925 would enhance legal protections and expand social services for battered immigrants and their families; and

Whereas, S.1925 has not yet been voted on by the full Senate, and no bill has yet been introduced in the House of Representatives; and

Whereas, In the past seventeen years, VAWA has aided thousands of women and families and has likely prevented untold numbers from entering into or remaining in abusive relationships; and

Whereas, According to data compiled by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, since VAWA has been implemented, the number of individuals killed by an intimate partner has decreased by 34% for women and 57% for men; and

Whereas, The National Task Force to End Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Against Women states that VAWA programs save lives and money and its reauthorization is imperative to continue doing so; and

Whereas, In a statement marking the 17th anniversary of VAWA, Vice President Joseph Biden, who as Senator was the originator and primary sponsor of the original legislation, called on “a new generation to take action to reduce the high rates of violence and assault that continue to threaten young men and women across the country”; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the United States Congress to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

JP
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