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FOSTERING ADVOCACY AND
COLLABORATION THROUGH SCIENCE

Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization

HR6545

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The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was enacted in 1994 to address violence against women, with an emphasis on domestic and sexual violence. It was reauthorized in 2000, 2005, and 2013 with large bipartisan majorities. It is up for reauthorization in September 2018.

Violence Against Women is a Persistent Problem

- Over a lifetime, 18% of women are raped, 16% are stalked, and 36% experience intimate partner violence (IPV) [1].
- IPV and sexual assault result in unwanted pregnancies, poor pregnancy outcomes, physical injuries, including repetitive traumatic brain injuries (TBI), sexually transmitted infection (STI), cervical cancer, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), homelessness, depression, and suicide [1-9].
- IPV has lasting effects on the children of victims [10].
- IPV against women is estimated to cost \$5.8 billion per year [11].

The VAWA is an Effective Counter to Sexual and Domestic Violence

- The VAWA provides grants through DoJ to support law enforcement, arrest, and prosecution in cases of IPV, sexual violence, and child abuse, and it provides grants through DHHS to support college and community rape prevention and education, domestic violence shelters, and hotlines [10,11].
- IPV against women has decreased by 53% between 1993 and 2008, and intimate partner homicides have declined by 26% [14].
- Jurisdictions across the US that received VAWA grants saw significant reductions in violence against women, compared to jurisdictions that did not, with a 1% increase in VAWA funds equating to a 0.1% decrease in rape and aggravated assaults [13].
- The 2013 reauthorization protected groups at high risk, including LGBTQ, Native Americans, and victims of human trafficking. It also expanded protection for immigrants by adding stalking to the list of crimes that can justify a refugee visa [12].

Reauthorization of the VAWA can improve protections for women

- The VAWA Reauthorization Act of 2018 proposes implementing violence prevention education in schools and on college campuses, increasing outreach to youth in underserved communities, expanding the definitions of violence to include economic and technological abuse, and increasing funding for violence prevention grants. Research supports these expansions:
 - A 2011 CDC Report [15] found that nearly 23% of female IPV victims first experienced some form of violence by that partner before age 18. Studies suggest that youth in the juvenile justice and child protective services systems are at elevated risk [16].
 - The nature of abuse continues to expand as digital technology and social media create new opportunities [17].

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