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Re-authorize and fully-fund the *Violence Against Women Act* and co-sponsor the *International Violence Against Women Act* when it is re-introduced

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was the first federal legislation acknowledging domestic violence and sexual assault a crime. It also provides federal resources for community-coordinated responses to violence against women. VAWA, originally passed in 1994, is up for reauthorization this year.

The International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) would make stopping violence against women and girls a priority in United States diplomacy and foreign aid. The legislation would help end violence through prevention programs that educate women and girls and improve their economic opportunities, provide health interventions and support for survivors, and provide legal and judicial training aimed at holding abusers accountable.

VAWA is urgently needed. In 2009, domestic violence programs served more than *65,000 adults and children a day in the United States*. However, over 9,200 of those requests went unmet because domestic violence agencies lacked the funding and staff to meet the demand.

The most common reasons given by women who stay in abusive relationships are lack of money, shelter, and police support. Poverty is linked to violence against women. Protecting programs that alleviate poverty will reduce violence against women.

Quality education and equitable employment require healthy and safe learning and working environments. Discriminatory practices and violence, at home and in the work place, disproportionately affect women and girls, and significantly inhibit the likelihood of their success in work and school.

IVAWA is urgently needed legislation that would address rape during armed conflict; reform the judicial response to violence against women and enhance efforts to bring perpetrators to justice; help survivors escape and recover from violence; prevent transmission and deaths from HIV and AIDS; expand economic opportunities for women; and educate boys and men to be leaders and allies of ending violence against women and girls. It will make foreign assistance more effective and efficient, increase transparency and accountability, and prioritize stopping violence against women and girls.

Internationally, experts estimate that up to *one in three women* will be beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in their lifetimes, with *rates reaching 70 percent in some countries*. Nearly 50 percent of all sexual assaults worldwide are against adolescent girls aged 15 years or younger.

The IVAWA provides the comprehensive, coordinated response that is needed to meaningfully help women stop violence in their lives. It was drafted in consultation with over forty women's groups in developing countries and more than 100 experts and organizations working in the field.

This is a wise investment because violence against women breeds the kind of poverty, instability and extremism that foments terrorism. Nations who have the worst track record in preventing violence against women are also the most unstable.

Free from violence, women and girls would be safe to access the poverty reduction, education and health programs that the U.S. supports. When women and girls thrive, societies are more likely to prosper economically, reduce rates of HIV and AIDS, decrease child and maternal mortality, and have more participatory and democratic governments.