



National Alliance to
End Sexual Violence

*A NATIONAL VOICE FOR STATE
AND LOCAL ADVOCATES DEDICATED
TO ENDING SEXUAL VIOLENCE.*

September 13, 2012

Statement on the Eighteenth Anniversary of The Violence Against Women Act

Today is the eighteenth birthday of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). And while VAWA should be coming of age today, Congress has failed to reauthorize our nation's frontline response to violence against women. VAWA has undoubtedly provided states' with essential tools to address this violence, but our nation's work to address rape and sexual abuse is far from complete. Legislation pending in Congress takes the next critical steps to strengthen responses to crimes of sexual violence.

As 18 year olds across the nation head off to college for the first time on their own, Congress must act immediately to pass legislation reauthorizing VAWA and keep them safe. If a student is raped during her freshman year in college, when young people are particularly at risk, will an advocate be available to respond? Will a sexual assault nurse examiner be available to provide medical care and collect evidence? Will the DNA evidence be tested to find potential serial offenders? Will the case be prosecuted? The answer is yes if VAWA is reauthorized and maybe not if Congress fails to pass VAWA. Many states lack examiners and specialized prosecutors and have rape kit backlogs. VAWA has provisions to support advocacy services; encourage states to hire and train nurse examiners, law enforcement officers and prosecutors; and test rape kits.

Will your daughter or son receive information about how to prevent rape and domestic violence when they arrive on campus? The answer is yes if VAWA is reauthorized and maybe not if Congress fails to pass VAWA. VAWA reauthorizes the Rape Prevention and Education Program and augments university reporting requirements for these crimes.

But VAWA does much more than support those on campus, it also provides first ever protections for rape victims in public housing. On June 18, 2007, ten armed youths between the ages of 14 and 18 forced themselves into a Florida woman's public housing apartment where they repeatedly raped her and poured household chemicals into her son's eyes and over her body. VAWA reauthorization includes protections to help victims like this move to safety.

Now, as VAWA turns 18, is the perfect time for Congress to act and pass final legislation so that our nation's stand against this violence can again be the law of the land, and we can take the next steps together to end sexual violence.