



## **The Violence Against Women Act**

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is the major federal response to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking (“the four crimes”). First introduced in 1994, it is now up for reauthorization. A bill that is responsive to the needs of victims and survivors must be passed.

### **The Stats**

While the four crimes have decreased significantly since 1994 when VAWA was first passed, rates of violence are still far too high:

- One in five women and one in 59 men are raped in their lifetimes;
- One in four women and one in seven men experience severe physical abuse by an intimate partner in their lifetimes;
- One in six women and one in nineteen men experience stalking in their lifetimes;
- Every 16 hours, a woman is murdered by a male intimate partner with a gun;
- More than 80% of Native American and Alaskan Native women will be a victim of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, or stalking, often by non-tribal members.

### **The Legislation**

On April 4, the House of Representatives passed H.R.1585, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2019, with bipartisan support. It makes vital improvements that are necessary to prevent domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking and to hold offenders accountable.

It is time for the Senate to introduce and pass a bill that is substantially similar to H.R.1585, including:

- Increases investment in prevention and youth services to change the culture of violence and promote healthy relationships
- Expands tribal jurisdiction to allow tribes to prosecute sexual assault in addition to the crimes of domestic violence and dating violence
- Closes the “boyfriend loophole” and “stalking loophole” and provides law enforcement with more tools to help reduce homicides

### **Why?**

Every time VAWA has been reauthorized, it has been strengthened based on our increased understanding of gender-based violence. Passing a VAWA substantially similar to H.R.1585 will maintain protections for all victims, make vital investments in sexual assault prevention, ensure sexual predators who prey on Native women are prosecuted, protect victims of domestic violence from intimate partner homicide, and increase victims’ access to safe housing and economic stability.

### **Next steps**

- Contact your Senators and ask them to help ensure that a strong VAWA substantially similar to H.R. 1585 is introduced
- Write a Letter to the Editor or Op-Ed for your local paper or other publication
- Raise VAWA at a Town Hall Meeting or lobby your Senator in his or her district office
- Sign JWI’s petition in support of VAWA’s passage