



# Department of Justice

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## **Justice Department Commemorates Fifteen Years of the Violence Against Women Act**

The Department of Justice today commemorated the 15th anniversary of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which was signed into law on September 13, 1994. This critical legislation was created in recognition of the severity of the crimes associated with domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. The anniversary also marks 15 years since the creation of the Department's Office on Violence Against Women (OVW), which administers financial and technical assistance to communities around the country to facilitate the creation of programs, policies and practices aimed at ending domestic and dating violence, sexual assault and stalking.

"We've made tremendous progress since the Violence Against Women Act first passed in 1994, but we have much more to do. We cannot rest. It will take all of us to fulfill the promise to end domestic violence and sexual assault," said Vice President Joe Biden, the author of the landmark Violence Against Women Act.

"The Violence Against Women Act forever changed the way this nation meets our responsibility to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault. It has been an essential building block in the Justice Department's work to end violence against women," said Attorney General Eric Holder. "It is only in working together that we can make a difference and save lives, and the Justice Department will continue to take every possible step to enforce laws protecting victims of violence and to provide resources to aid victim service providers."

"Without a doubt, VAWA would never have happened without the steadfast commitment and work of the countless advocates, coalitions and community partners who worked tirelessly for federal legislation to mark the importance of the issue and provide vital resources," said Catherine Pierce, Acting Director of OVW. "In the past 15 years, countless lives have been saved, the voices of survivors have been heard, families have been protected, and the criminal justice community has been trained on the complex responses to domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking."

The anniversary marks the start of a year-long anniversary effort to raise public awareness on issues around violence against women, to reinforce and build coalitions among federal, state, local and tribal law enforcement and victim services communities, and to reinforce the goal of ending domestic and dating violence, sexual assault and stalking for men, women and children across the country.

In recognition of the severity of the crimes associated with gender-motivated violence, Congress passed VAWA as part of the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994. VAWA is comprehensive legislative designed to end violence against women through criminal penalties, civil remedies, federal grant programs, and research and was reauthorized in 2000 and 2005. Since the passage of VAWA, there has been a paradigm shift in how the issue of violence against women is addressed in communities throughout the nation.

OVW was created to specifically implement VAWA and subsequent legislation. Currently, OVW administers two formula grant programs and 17 discretionary grant programs, all of which were established under VAWA and subsequent legislation. The office has also maintained a 15-year partnership with state, local and tribal governments, coalitions, law enforcement, prosecutors, judges and court personnel, victim advocates, health care providers and national organizations.

Every day, VAWA funding makes a difference in how communities across America help victims and hold offenders accountable. For example, subgrantees receiving funding awarded by states through OVW's STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program reported that, in calendar year 2007:

- More than 505,000 victims were served;
- Over 1,201,000 services were provided to victims; and
- More than 4,700 individuals were arrested for violations of protection orders.

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