

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 17, 2012

Dear Women of the House Republican Conference,

As mothers, daughters, grandmothers, and women intent on protecting the inclusive and bipartisan history of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), we are reaching out to you to ask for your help. With only a matter of days remaining in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, we are asking that you work with your leadership to take action and finally pass the Senate's bipartisan Violence Against Women Act reauthorization. With your leadership on this issue we will resolve this matter in a way that puts the safety of all women ahead of partisan politics.

As you know, the Violence Against Women Act enables important efforts across the country to combat domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. It is widely supported by law enforcement officials, victims' advocate groups, and the public at large. It should be one of the least controversial and most bipartisan measures we consider.

In fact, until now, this bill has been among the most broadly supported measures considered in both the House and Senate and has only become more so over time. The original VAWA passed in 1994 with strong bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. Support for the legislation's renewal in 2000 was more lopsided, with a 95-0 vote in the Senate, and a 371-1 vote in the House. And an even stronger consensus emerged in 2005, with unanimous approval in the Senate, and a 415-4 vote in the House.

However, it has now been more than 230 days since the Senate gave bipartisan approval to a renewal of the Violence Against Women Act. The 68-31 Senate vote was a convincing show of bipartisanship at a time when legislation in the Senate is often subject to far more partisan treatment. The legislation has, however, stalled since then. House Republican leaders have so far refused to pass the Senate bill, instead insisting on an alternative watered-down measure that removes key protections for women. All women should be protected, and introducing into this legislation the notion that some women subject to violence deserve to be protected while others do not is something we believe we can all agree is unacceptable. We should not pick and choose which victims of abuse to help and which to ignore.

In 2013 and beyond, the women of the House and Senate are primed to play an even larger role in guiding national policy and we should do so by working across party lines. Let's not wait any longer to take a critical step forward. We urge you join us by working with your party leaders to put women's safety first. Saving the lives of women is and should be above politics, and every one of us without regard to party should cast a vote for the safety of all women.

Sincerely,

  
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Bruce Fry

Amy Klobuchar

Jamie Shaheen

Maria Cantwell

Barbara Mikulski

Dianne Feinstein

Nellie Stetterow

Mary J. Gansino

Kay R. Hagan

Kirsten E. Gillibrand