



UNITED STATES SENATE

Senator Murray's Work to Help Survivors of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

- The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) established a national strategy to address gender-based violence. Congress passed VAWA with bipartisan support in 1994, and reauthorized the Act by bipartisan majorities in 2000 and 2005.
- In 2012, when Congressional Republicans opposed extending VAWA's protections to LGBT individuals and undocumented immigrants, Senator Murray fought for 16 months, leading Senate Democrats to secure a strong deal to protect women.
- The reauthorization that President Obama signed into law in May 2013 ensures tribal women, the LGBT community, immigrants, and women on college campuses have the tools and resources to help combat gender-based violence and hold perpetrators accountable. The bill notably allows tribal courts to prosecute non-native abusers against Indian spouses, intimate partners, and dating partners in court, inspired by Deborah Parker of the Tulalip tribes.
- This bipartisan law also strengthens the ability of institutions of higher education to combat and prevent domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking on campuses.
- VAWA is up for reauthorization in 2018.

Additional Legislation Supported by Murray to Help Survivors of Domestic Abuse and Sexual Assault

In addition to strengthening VAWA, Senator Murray is a leader on other legislation to help survivors of sexual assault.

- **Sexual Assault Survivor's Rights:** This bill passed both the House and the Senate and was signed into law on October 11, 2016. Senator Murray cosponsored the bill, which gives survivors of sexual assault and rape the right to have their rape kits and other evidence preserved for the length of the statute of limitations, the right to be notified 60 days before it is destroyed, the right to request for the kit to be kept longer, and the right to be notified of any test results that are from their rape kit. Survivors must also be given written notice of their rights.
- **Survivors' Access to Supportive Care Act (SASCA):** Senator Murray introduced SASCA in response to a Seattle woman who contacted her Seattle office after an extreme poorly-handled report of sexual assault at a Seattle hospital, where the woman was denied a rape kit. Senator Murray's resulting investigation found it is a normal practice for hospitals to dismiss survivors of sexual assault by referring them to other hospitals, and that there is very little information at the state or federal level on which hospitals provide rape kits, how they are paid for, what training is provided for examiners, or whether there is standard information available for survivors (e.g. information on a victims compensation program or advocacy services). Senator Murray has been pushing hospitals to come up with clear guidelines on how our hospitals handle these cases and to ensure better coordination and care for survivors. SASCA works to address these issues by treating sexual assault examinations as a healthcare issue, rather than only as a law enforcement issue. This bill is endorsed by the Washington State Hospital Association, Washington State Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs, the International Forensic Nurses Association, and the National Association to End Sexual Violence.

- **SAFE Act:** Last year, Senator Murray introduced the Security and Financial Empowerment (SAFE) Act of 2015, building on supports for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking from the VAWA and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). The SAFE Act would: ensure survivors who need services like medical attention and legal assistance are able take safe leave from work; allow survivors who have had to leave their jobs to receive unemployment insurance; protect survivors from being fired because of harassment by an abuser or because they requested protections at work to stay safe; protect against retaliation through social media; and invest in a national awareness campaign to encourage a culture of prevention and support.
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline:** Since 1996, the National Domestic Violence Hotline has been a vital link for women, men, children, and families affected by domestic violence. It gives callers (and live chatters) confidential and individualized support, crisis intervention, direct connections to immediate safety sources, and other options for victims moving forward in communities across the country. Due to Senator Murray's efforts, the LHHS FY16 Omnibus provided \$8.25 million to the Hotline, an increase of \$3.75 million – or 83 percent. The additional funds allow the Hotline to increase the number of bilingual advocates, improve web interventions, and expand Hotline services to tribal communities.
- **Healthy Families Act:** Last year, Senator Murray introduced the Healthy Families Act, which would allow workers to earn up to seven paid sick days a year. Notably, this legislation would extend paid sick days to workers who are seeking assistance related to domestic violence, as well as workers who need time off due to illness, a sick family member, or to seek routine medical care.