

Speaking in Burlington Friday, Senator Patrick Leahy (D) and Congressman Peter Welch (D), joined by the Executive Director of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, spoke about the importance of continuing the lifesaving Violence Against Women Act.

Leahy, with the strong support of Welch, has been leading efforts in Washington to reauthorize the landmark law, which has been the foundation of the country's national response to domestic and sexual violence since its enactment in 1994. Leahy is the author of bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the law. The legislation is drawn from the feedback and suggestions of advocates like Karen Tronsgard-Scott of the Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, who are working in the field every day to help victims of domestic violence.



Leahy said, "The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence and Women Helping Battered Women are just two organizations that have used VAWA grant funds here in Vermont to help victims with transitional housing services, counseling, job training, and credit repair. In fact, many of the programs developed by these Vermont organizations have become models for

the rest of the country. Make no mistake: VAWA saves lives. The Senate has approved, with strong bipartisan support in a polarized climate, legislation to continue these lifesaving programs, and I call on the House of Representatives to do the same. Survivors and those in the field like Karen who are working every day to support victims, cannot wait."

Welch said, "The Violence Against Women Act should be about one thing: Protecting victims of domestic violence. We can't let ideological battles distract from reauthorizing this important legislation that protects millions of Americans. Senator Leahy found a path forward with his bill, which passed the Senate with strong bipartisan support. The House should follow suit and immediately pass the Leahy bill."

Tronsgard-Scott said, "Domestic violence and sexual assault can hurt anyone, regardless of race, immigrant status, and sexual orientation. Senator Leahy's VAWA legislation addresses that. In Vermont and around the country, it is critical that ALL victims receive services and know that their perpetrators will be held accountable. The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence deeply appreciates Senator Leahy's unwavering dedication to ensuring safety and justice for ALL victims. For the sake of the thousands of Vermonters who reach out to our programs each year, Senator Leahy's VAWA bill must find its way into law."

The Leahy-authored legislation was approved by the Senate with a strong bipartisan vote in April. The Republican leadership in the House of Representatives, however, forced a vote in the House on legislation that would roll back critical existing protections for victims of domestic and sexual violence, and eliminate improved protections for underserved victims, including immigrant women, Native American women, and gay and lesbian victims, which are included in the Senate-passed, Leahy-authored bill.

Vermont organizations have received federal assistance to support efforts to help victims of domestic violence since the VAWA was first enacted in 1994. The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence provides technical assistance and training to member programs and statewide partners, informs public policy, and coordinates statewide projects to assist victims of violence. In developing his legislation, Leahy had invited Tronsgard-Scott to testify in Washington about the Vermont Network's successful programs in Vermont.

In 2011, Vermont organizations received \$3.1 million in assistance through programs authorized by the Violence Against Women Act.

- The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence – Received a \$211,181 grant from the State and Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Coalitions Program. The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence provides technical assistance and training to member programs and statewide partners, informs public policy, and coordinates statewide projects.
- Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services – Received a VAWA grant of \$1.3 million through the Rural Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking Assistance Program; a \$151,361 grant through the Sexual Assault Services Program; and a \$805,179 STOP Violence Against Women Formula Grant. The Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services joins with victims, survivors, and those who interact with victims and offenders to provide, sustain, and support a collaborative system of direct services across Vermont that is comprehensive, victim-centered, trauma-informed, and accessible to all diverse populations. The Center also works to hold offenders accountable for the harm they have caused victims and communities.
- Have Justice, Will Travel – Received a \$341,014 grant from the Rural Domestic violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault and Stalking Assistance Program. Have Justice Will Travel works closely with groups and other social services in Vermont. The organization provides in-home consultations, transportation to and from court hearings, and free legal representation for protective orders and family law issues for low income battered women and their children.
- Safeline – Received a VAWA grant of \$314,654 for Legal Assistance for Victims. Safeline runs a 24/7 hotline that provides support, safety planning, information and referrals as well as in person support and legal, economic and medical advocacy.