

In-District Lobbying Guide

Now is the time to meet with your Members of Congress in the district!

As you know, the President's Budget Request for FY '09 proposes devastating cuts in funding for the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund. You don't have to come to Washington to tell your Members of Congress what you think – you can schedule lobby visits with them in the district. (As non-profit organizations, victim services providers can lobby Congress within certain simple limitations. For more information, see the "Lobbying and Non-Profit Status" Fact Sheet.)

Attached is a list of Members of Congress on the Appropriations committees who have the most control over the FY '09 Congressional Budget. It is particularly important for these members to hear from their constituents. However, spring is a strategic time in the Appropriations process when all Members of Congress can influence VAWA and VOCA funding. (See the "US Federal Budget and Appropriations Process Explanation" for more details.)

When can you meet with your Members of Congress in the district?

Most Senators and Representatives are at home on Fridays, Mondays and during the weekend. (They are in Washington, DC Tuesday through Thursday.)

Members are also at home working during weeks when Congress is in "recess." This spring these are scheduled for Feb. 16-24, March 15-30, May 24-June 1, & June 30-July 6.

Three Steps to Schedule a Meeting or Event

You can schedule a meeting with your Member of Congress or their staff in their district office. Or invite your Member of Congress to an event that your organization is planning or invite them to tour your program and learn more about your services. There are three steps to schedule a meeting or event with your Member of Congress.

1. Contact the Scheduler. Members of Congress have staff dedicated to managing their schedules both while they are in Washington and at home in their district. To schedule a meeting or event, contact their district office and ask to speak with the Scheduler who is responsible for their schedule while they are in the district. (This person may be in the district office or a Scheduler in their DC office staff may handle all events.) To get information on how to contact their district offices, go to www.senate.gov or www.house.gov and find your Member's personal web site. Or, you can contact their DC office through the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121.

2. Email or fax a scheduling request letter. Most Congressional offices will request a short letter addressed to the Scheduler that states the purpose of the meeting, the proposed dates and times, and the individuals who want to attend. If you are inviting the Member to an event or to tour your program, give details about the invitation and explain that you would be honored to have the Member attend or visit. Mention that it would be a great press opportunity for your Member. Make sure to include your contact information so that the Scheduler can get back to you.

3. Follow-up and confirm the meeting details. After you send your letter, make a phone call to the Scheduler to follow-up. They will help arrange the details and ensure that your Member of Congress has all the information that they need to prepare. It may take several phone calls before you hear a response and sometimes they will not be able to give an answer immediately. Because they receive a high volume of faxes, they will often they ask you to resend your scheduling request letter. Be patient and offer to call again closer to the event or desired meeting date.

If you need help scheduling or preparing for a meeting with your Members of Congress you can contact your state domestic violence or sexual assault coalition. The coalitions can help you coordinate your lobbying efforts with other local programs and advocates, and representatives from the coalition may be able to join you for an in-district meeting.

Make the Most of your Meeting

Whether you attend a meeting at their office or they tour your local shelter, the amount of time that you have with your Member of Congress will be limited, usually to only 15 to 30 minutes, so you want to be prepared to make the most of this time! The following steps will help you have a successful meeting.

- ☑ **Bring a group!** The purpose of your lobby visit is to help your Member of Congress understand the importance of VAWA and VOCA funding. If possible, organize a group of community partners who can describe the role this funding plays in their work or the impact it has had in the community. Possible attendees could include law enforcement, nurses or other medical providers, teachers, faith leaders, board members, survivors or other community partners. Keep the group small (no more than 4-5 people) and plan ahead so that everyone understands the focus of the meeting and is prepared to contribute to the discussion.

If you have a speaker's bureau of survivors, or you know a survivor and her story extremely well, and she is experienced at telling her story, she could be dynamic addition to your group. But be extremely cautious, as this can be stressful for a survivor, and Members of Congress will not respond well to lengthy stories or intense emotion.

- ☑ **Thank your Member of Congress for their support for victims of domestic and sexual violence.** If you know that they have taken steps to support VAWA and VOCA funding in the past, be sure to thank them for their actions. This is a good way to start the meeting off positively and will show them that you appreciate their efforts.
- ☑ **Tell your story and make the case for increased funding.** Meeting with your Member of Congress is an opportunity to tell you story and illustrate the need for VAWA and VOCA funding. Use the "Talking Points for Local Programs" to prepare to tell your story. Prepare personal stories and anecdotes to share, as well as statistics from your community that illustrate why the current funding does not meet the need.
- ☑ **Bring materials to support your request** such as a copy of the "FY 2009 Appropriations Fact Sheet," materials about your program, stories and statistics from your community, and your business card. You should also include a written letter asking for their support. (See the "Sample Letter" for a template that can be adapted for your use.)
- ☑ **Ask for a commitment to support increased funding.** Your goal is to enlist your Member of Congress's support for increased funding for VAWA and VOCA, so be as specific as you can. After you have discussed the issue, ask the direct question, ***"Will you request full funding for VAWA and \$717 million for VOCA in the FY 2009 Congressional Budget?"*** Ask them to include VAWA and VOCA in their personal request to Appropriators. Also, ask them to sign-on to a letter with fellow Representatives/Senators to Appropriators that will request increased VAWA and VOCA funding.
- ☑ **Thank them for meeting and follow-up promptly.** Be sure to thank your Member for taking time to talk with you and let them know that you appreciate their work to help victims. Promptly following the meeting send a written thank-you note. Follow-up with their staff to let them know how they can take action to support VAWA and VOCA funding. Also, be sure to include any information or materials that you promised during the meeting.
- ☑ **If you meet with Congressional staff, be respectful and do not be discouraged.** Members of Congress depend on their staff to help them follow the numerous issues that are important to the communities that they represent. Congressional staff are often the most knowledgeable on your issues and they have substantial influence over your Members of Congress. Regardless of their title or age, they are responsible for helping the Member make policy decisions and can be very important allies in helping victims. Treat them with respect and work hard to build a positive relationship!

Little Ocean, Big Splash.
You can meet with District Office staff even when the Member is in DC. You can also invite Congressional staff to visit your program! Though it may not be as exciting or high profile, an in-person visit can build their relationship with your program and their understanding of victim services.

A few things to remember...

- ***Make it personal and district-specific.*** Tell the Member how your concerns about funding impact real victims and families in your community.
- ***Stay on the subject.*** Most Members of Congress have the “gift of gab” and will (intentionally and unintentionally) tend to divert you from your topic to something they know more about, or hold forth at great length about their own funding issues. Don't stray, and don't let them evade or change the subject. Be polite, but firmly stick to the topic of funding for VAWA and VOCA.
- ***Don't get frustrated or flustered.*** Legislators may make critical or uninformed remarks about domestic and sexual violence or your organization and the services you provide. Do not let this frustrate you or become defensive; instead, focus on Appropriations and emphasize why their support is so important. They may ask tough questions. If you don't know, tell them you will get back to them.
- ***Be honest and keep your word.*** Never promise anything you cannot deliver. Never lie or mislead a Member of Congress about the relative importance of an issue, the statistics you are providing, or any other matter.

Events and Visits: Handle with Care

Roll out the red carpet. If a Member of Congress attends an event or visits your program, be prepared to lavish them with attention and ensure that they receive attention from the press or other attendees. Greet them upon arrival and introduce them to other VIPs such as your board members or important supporters who can thank them for attending.

Give them an opportunity to get in front of a microphone and speak. Most Senators and Representatives will want to share their thoughts about why they are there and talk about what they have done to help victims. You can discuss this with their Scheduler beforehand. Try to get the Member of Congress to the microphone quickly – they may not have time to wait and listen to other speakers. Check in with them or their staff about how much time they have available.

Record the moment. Invite press to cover the event or accompany the Member on a tour of the program. Take a photo of the Member during their visit. If press does not attend, you can share the photo with your local media. And, a photo with a Member is always a great addition to your web site, newsletter, or fundraising appeal.

What Else Can You Do?

The most successful lobbying involves personal and direct contact with your Member of Congress through in-person meetings or events. But, other steps can also prove effective. Here are some examples of other lobbying strategies that you can use.

- **Call your Member of Congress** in their Washington office and ask to speak with your Member's staffer who works on domestic violence issues. Mention that you are a constituent (if you are) and give your name, address and organizational affiliation. Tell them that you are calling to ask the Member of Congress to support funding for the Violence Against Women Act and the Victims of Crime Act Fund. Be brief and specific. Offer to be a resource and provide more information about the needs in your community.
- **Write your Member of Congress a personal letter** asking them to support funding for VAWA and VOCA. (See the “Sample Letter” for a template that can be adapted for your use.) Be sure to personalize it with examples from your programs or community. It is best to both mail the letter and send a copy via fax (you can find their DC office fax number on their web site) because security precautions can delay Congressional mail by several weeks.

- **Email your Member of Congress** as an alternative to writing a letter. This may be less effective than a formal letter, but is a good alternative if you are short on time. Again, strive to make the email as personal as possible.
- **Mobilize survivors or community members to write Congress.** Ask survivors, board members, volunteers or other community members to write Congress about VAWA and VOCA funding. Even postcards with a few sentences about why victim services are important can make a big impact. If possible, collect these postcards or letters yourself and mail or hand-deliver them to your Member's district office to ensure that they are received.
- **Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed** to raise awareness about the critical need for services and the role that VAWA and VOCA play in providing those services in your community. Publishing an editorial or op-ed is an opportunity to educate members of your community and enlist them as allies in calling on Congress to increase funding. Be sure to give credit to your Member of Congress by mentioning them in your letter/article if they have supported increased funding. And, urge them to support increased funding in the FY '09 Congressional Budget.
- **Mobilize the media.** Plan a town hall meeting, send out a press release or a media advisory, or pay for a newspaper advertisement. Again, the key is to raise awareness and get others involved in asking for Congress to support increased funding!

The District Office

While they are in Washington, Members of Congress have staff working in their District Offices.

Good to have on your side. Many District Offices have caseworkers or staff that are dedicated to helping constituents navigate federal programs. Sometimes they are also connected to state and local government agencies and can help with issues at or between these levels. They are good allies to have when you and your agency are dealing with challenges or helping clients navigate systems.

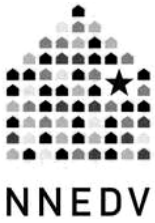
Good to know. Members often have special district aides who are staff that they trust to represent them at district events. District aides can be very strategic allies because they are often well-connected in the community and have the Members' ear.

Good to contact. Sometimes writing or calling the District Office can have a different effect, too. Usually the District Office reports to the DC office about what issues or legislative priorities they are hearing about from constituents. If a District Office receives 10 phone calls or 5 letters about an issue, this may stand out more than 20 phone calls or 10 letters about the same issue if they went to the DC office.

Long-Term Strategies

Congress goes through the Appropriations process every year. (See the "Appropriations Overview" for more detail.) This means that we also need to focus on building long-term relationships with them.

- **Join an action list** for a national domestic violence, sexual assault or crime victims' advocacy organization! This will help you to stay on top of issues, learn about strategic times to lobby, and get useful materials.
- **Get to know legislators well.** It helps to pay attention to who your Members of Congress are and what issues are important to them. You can research their interests, districts, legislative priorities, voting records and more on their web sites. This will help you build rapport and enlist their support for victim services by connecting it to issues that they care about.
- **Build coalitions** with other individuals and organizations. Legislators will pay more attention to an issue when you represent more than one vote. Remember there is strength in numbers!
- **Always say, "Thank you!"** Be sure to keep in touch with your Members of Congress and their staff and always thank them for the work that they do for victims. It is important for them to know you are paying attention.



Lobbying and Nonprofit Status

Domestic violence programs can lobby under federal law. Federal laws allow for nonprofit organizations to lobby as long as their activities stay within generous lobbying limits. However, it is important to understand the allowable activities and the prohibitions on using federal funding to lobby.

What is lobbying?

Lobbying is specific definition for a type of advocacy, and includes both direct and grassroots lobbying. Direct Lobbying is defined as: *Communication with a Legislator that expresses a View about Specific Legislation.* Grassroots Lobbying is defined as: *Communication with the Public that expresses a View about Specific Legislation and Includes a Call to Action.* In order for an action to be considered direct lobbying or grassroots lobbying under the federal lobbying limitations, it must contain all of the above elements. It is not lobbying if one or more of the required elements is missing.

Lobbying	NOT Lobbying
Sending a letter to your United States Senators and Representative that explicitly asks them to support VAWA funding.	Giving a tour of your shelter to a Member of Congress or Congressional staff person.
Calling your Member of Congress's office and asking their staff to vote "yes" for VAWA funding.	Sending your agency newsletter to your Senators and Representatives offices.
Asking your board members to call or write your Members of Congress and ask for their support for more funding for VAWA.	Announcing at your fundraising event that your Congressional delegation supported full funding for VAWA.

How much can my program lobby?

The Internal Revenue Service sets limits on the amount of lobbying that 501(c)(3) organizations can engage in depending on which of two sets of rules the organization chooses to fall under -- the "501(h) expenditure test" or the "insubstantial part test." The 501(h) expenditure test allows nonprofits to calculate the amount of their budget that can be spent on lobbying by filling out IRS Form 5768 and using a formula (for example, up to 20% of the first \$500,000 of the annual budget can be spent on lobbying). Under the insubstantial part test, a nonprofit may engage in lobbying so long as it does not account for a substantial part of their activities. Both tests allow for generous amounts of lobbying.

Can we use federal funding to lobby?

No. Nonprofits that received funding through federal grants, contracts or cooperative agreements may not use that federal funding to lobby. However, even if you receive federal funding, you can use other funding in your budget to cover lobbying expenses.

What activities would not count as lobbying?

Activities that you, your staff, your family and friends engage in on your own time and with your own resources do not fall under the lobbying restrictions. For example, if you receive action alerts from NNEDV on a personal email account and forward those to your friends and family, this does not count as lobbying. Also, if your staff use their personal cell phones during non-work time to call their member of Congress and ask for their support for VAWA funding this is not lobbying.

Bottom Line: Lobbying is one more way that domestic violence programs can represent the interests of battered women. Participating in meetings with your members of Congress, emailing and calling your members of Congress and their staff, and asking your board members, volunteers and other supporters to contact Congress do not violate federal law.

For more detailed information on lobbying and public advocacy for nonprofit organizations, visit the Alliance for Justice at www.allianceforjustice.org or call 1-866-NPLOBBY. This fact sheet is intended to provide information and is not a substitute for legal advice or counsel.

How does Federal Funding happen for VAWA programs and how can YOU make a difference?

The Budget process and the Appropriations process are very connected, but the distinctions are important to understanding the federal funding process. The Budget process creates a non-binding **Budget Resolution** (an outline of how much total money is available) while the Appropriations process later in the year creates the final, binding, **Congressional Budget** (divvying up the actual money) for that fiscal year.

The Congressional Budget process begins with consideration of the **President's Budget Request**. (Believe it or not, the President's Budget is developed almost a whole year in advance, so you may hear from us about advocacy for *next* year's President's Budget at the same that we're working on Appropriations!)

Kicking off the Budget and Appropriations process each year in February, the President presents a Budget Request for the following fiscal year. This is the first step in the year-long appropriations process. The end result of the budget and appropriations process is a Congressional Budget which usually differs quite significantly from the President's Budget. For Fiscal Year 2008, however, the President was adamant that Congress adhere to his overall budget numbers – and not increase his proposed budget total. This meant that Congress was forced to cut funding to programs to meet the President's budget request.

In this context, it is important for advocates to tell Congress how the President's Budget request would impact their programs and victims.



Key Terms for the Budget and Appropriations Process

Authorizations vs. Appropriations

When a bill is passed, it **authorizes** the Appropriations Committee to spend a certain amount on a given program. That authorization is more of a guideline. Congress can appropriate **less**, they can appropriate **more**, they can **refuse to fund** it at all, and they can appropriate money for programs that have long since expired.

This is true of all “discretionary” grant programs, like VAWA. However, not all government spending is discretionary.

Mandatory vs. Discretionary Spending

Mandatory programs are big “entitlement” programs – like food stamps and Medicaid. The amount of money to be spent on them is set when those programs are initially *authorized.* **These programs do not go through the Appropriations process.** They receive that authorized amount every year.

This means there is only one way for Congress to cut spending for those programs – have the *Authorizing* committees agree to cut them back.

Don't the Budget Resolutions threaten to cut mandatory programs sometimes?

Yes. This is one reason we ask you to make calls as Congress works on the Budget Resolution. The Budget Resolution can cut mandatory spending by telling the *Authorizing* committees that they have to cut a certain amount out of those mandatory programs.

Recent Budget Resolutions included cuts to mandatory spending, which means the social services on which many victims of domestic violence rely would be reduced. Thanks to grassroots action, those cuts were less than they could have been.

Tax cuts are another form of “mandatory spending”. They can be attached to the Budget Resolution. The Budget Resolution cannot be filibustered, so it’s a good place to put a controversial tax cut.

What is the Budget Resolution’s Effect on Discretionary Spending?

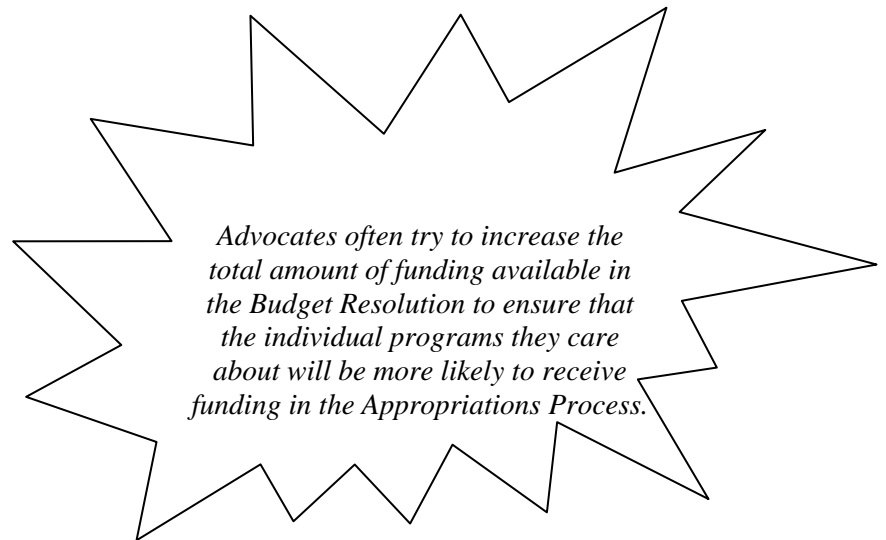


The Budget Resolution has a significant impact on the Appropriations process, because it sets the amount of money available for discretionary grant programs like VAWA.

Think of all federal spending as a pie – the Budget sets the size of the pie, and the Appropriations Committee divides that pie into slices. It allocates a total pot of money that can be spent by the Appropriations Committee later in the year. The Appropriations Committee then decides how much money each program should get, keeping the total pot of funding in mind. Programs that are a priority will be protected, while those that are not will get cut.

What does this mean?

For example, the Budget may say Congress can spend \$60 billion on Health programs. That means the Appropriations Committee can choose to spend that money however it likes, but it can't spend more than \$60 billion. If Congress spent more than \$60 billion on Health programs during the previous year, the Appropriations Committee will have to make cuts to discretionary Health programs to meet their Budget.



*Department of
Defense --
Available funds*



*Department of Justice --
Available funds*

The House and Senate Budget Resolutions often wind up looking very different from each other, so they are not always successfully resolved in conference committee (when several House and Senate members negotiate a compromise bill to pass both chambers). For this reason, there is often no final Budget Resolution passed. If there is no Budget Resolution, the previous year’s Resolution is generally in effect.

How the Budget Resolution Does (and Does Not) Control Appropriations and Other Bills

Budget Resolutions are fairly broad-brush and they also include spending outlines for the next 5-10 years. It is all “non-binding” – meaning other committees make the actual choices and could actually ignore the Budget Resolution. However, there are mechanisms for enforcement.

For instance, the Appropriations Committee could decide to ignore their Budget allocations and spend however much they see fit. But if they do that flagrantly, the Budget committee could choose to write their own Appropriations bill – an unpleasant thought.

Bills (including authorizing bills) that ignore the Budget Resolution can be challenged with a “budget point of order.” However, Congress can just vote (you need 60 votes in the Senate on these) to override that point of order and go ahead with the bill. In the House, the Rules Committee can deem a bill “in order” and waive the budget limitations. Because they require a “super majority” of 60 votes in the Senate, Budget points of order are difficult to overcome and Members of Congress try to ensure that their legislation will not be subject to one.

The Appropriations Process

The Appropriations process begins early in the spring, whether or not Congress successfully passes the Budget Resolution. They consider the President’s request for discretionary spending, the total allocations for their subcommittees, what was spent last year, and what their constituents have been requesting.

Within the House and Senate Appropriations committees, there are 13 subcommittees that each writes a bill to fund different agencies within the federal government. The process begins when each subcommittee receives their 302(b) allocation, which is the amount of discretionary funding that they have to allocate to the agencies in their bill – the overall pie that they can later divide in their bill. The 302(b) allocation is based on the total amount of funding in the Budget Resolution, so if this has not passed, the Appropriations committee will often use levels from the previous Budget Resolution.

*Department of Justice
Funding (302(b) allocation) –
The Whole Pie*



*Funding for a VAWA program
administered by DOJ, like STOP
Grants – a Slice of the Pie*

The Appropriations subcommittees spend the spring gathering input on their spending bills. They will hold subcommittee hearings, usually inviting speakers from the agencies in their jurisdiction to talk about the requests made in the President’s Budget.

During this time, members of Congress on the subcommittee give input on their priorities, both for special projects or “earmarks” that benefit their districts, but also for programs that they see as a priority for their constituents. In addition, members who are not on the subcommittee will write letters of request highlighting and even ranking their priorities for funding within each bill. The members of the Appropriations Committee also choose their priorities and submit them to the Chairs and Ranking Members on the Committee.

This is a critical time period to send sign-on letters to the Appropriations subcommittees as well as have individual Members asking for our programs to be a priority. This is why during the spring we ask you to call and write your members of Congress and meet with them. They need to hear from you so that they will prioritize funding for domestic violence programs!

Beginning in the late spring, the appropriators write their bills. The Appropriations bills originate in the House and then go to the Senate. Often the committee will move non-controversial bills like Defense and Military Construction first. They take more time to debate bills such as Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education, which contain critical social programs that have to compete for scarce dollars in their bill.

Labor, Health and Human Services



Commerce, Justice, Science



Military Construction



Appropriations Subcommittee Finish Line

As the Appropriations bills move through committee and onto the floor, there may be opportunities to offer amendments to increase funding for specific programs.

Supplemental Appropriations: At some point in the summer (at least once, sometimes more often) Congress will realize it didn't appropriate enough money **LAST YEAR** and will vote on a "supplemental" Appropriations bill. This is one way Congress stays in line with the Budget guidelines but then spends more money anyway. This is most commonly done for the war and other defense spending, but they stick all kinds of pork and unrelated spending onto the supplemental Appropriations bills.

Omnibus Appropriations: Getting it Done!

Sometimes, in order to finish the spending bills, the Congress will pass an "omnibus" that packages some or all of the Appropriations bills together and passes them as a bundle. If the Congress does not pass all of the spending bills by the beginning of the fiscal year, they will pass a stopgap measure called a "Continuing Resolution" or CR. This is a resolution that continues funding federal agencies for a few weeks or months at the level appropriated in the prior fiscal year, giving them more time to finish the process for the new fiscal year.

In rare occasions (like 2006!) the Appropriations bills drag on into the next calendar year.

In the end, the Appropriations bills are voted on by Congress, and after the House and Senate Appropriations bills are reconciled in conference committee, they become the Congressional Budget for that fiscal year. Then, the President must sign it for it to become law. If the President vetoes the bill (as he did for the Fiscal Year 2008 budget) it is sent back to Congress. Congress can attempt a veto override (2/3 of House and Senate must vote to override the President's veto, so this is difficult to accomplish), or they can redraft the bill to meet the President's requests as they did last year.

When does all of this happen?

Timeline of the Budget and Appropriations Process

February
1st Monday

The President proposes a Budget outlining what the Administration would like to see for ALL federal spending – mandatory and discretionary.

The Budget committee considers these requests along with their own priorities and proposes a Budget Resolution.

February &
March

Requests for earmarks are due to the Appropriations Committees. Members of Congress write letters to the Appropriations Committee noting their priorities for funding and making general requests.

Action Alert!

Call Congress to respond to the President’s Budget Request. Send letters to your Members of Congress requesting full funding for VAWA! Call and ask them to sign onto joint letters asking for full funding!

Early Spring

If there is a Budget Resolution passed, it usually occurs in the spring (though it may drag on for months – even into the next year!)

Action Alert!

You may be asked to call Congress to support amendments that would increase the size of the Budget for VAWA programs!

Spring

The Appropriations Subcommittees start writing their bills in the spring, usually before the Budget Resolution passes.

Late Spring/
Early Summer

Subcommittee bills are finished, voted on, then considered by the full Appropriations Committee. *The bills that fund VAWA are usually voted on in July.*

Action Alert!

You may be asked to call Congress to support amendments to increase VAWA funding!

Summer

Congress may vote on one or more “supplemental” Appropriations bills. Funding for VAWA programs is almost never included in these bills.

August

Members of Congress are home for “recess” and traveling through their districts listening to the concerns of their constituents.

Action Alert!

Take advantage of recess and meet with your Senators and Representatives in person – either at “town hall meetings” or by scheduling a visit!

September 30

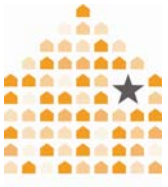
Congress tries to bring Appropriations bills to the floor before this time because it is the end of the fiscal year. They almost always fail, and continuing resolutions are passed to extend existing funding into the fall.

October/Nov

The Appropriations bills are voted on and go to conference committee. The final Congressional Budget is usually approved shortly before Congress recesses for the year.

Action Alert!

You may be asked to call Congress to support increased VAWA funding in the final Congressional Budget!



NNEADV

Talking Points VAWA, FVPSA and VOCA Appropriations

Use these talking points when you make lobby visits to members of Congress to outline our request for full funding for all Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and Family Violence Prevention and Services Act programs, and to raise the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund cap in the FY '09 Congressional Budget.

TELLING YOUR STORY

By sharing the needs in your community and the difficulties you face meeting those needs, you paint a picture of the critical need for full funding of VAWA, FVPSA and VOCA. Your story is the most important message you share with a Member of Congress.

Talk about how domestic violence affects your community.

- What progress have you seen due to VAWA, FVPSA and VOCA funding?
- What gaps still exist?
- Do you see demand for victim services increasing?
- What resources are needed in your community?
- Do you have a story you'd like to share?

As you describe the needs, there are specific funding streams that you can mention would help fill the gaps.

- Core shelter services → FVPSA/Battered Women's Shelters and VOCA funding
- Affordable housing → Transitional Housing and Long-Term Stability for Victims (VAWA)
- Coordination with police, judges, prosecutors → STOP Grants (VAWA)
- Legal services, such as protection orders, custody and divorce, and other civil legal representation → Legal Assistance for Victims (VAWA)
- Children's services, such as counselling and children's advocacy → Services for Children Exposed to Violence (VAWA), FVPSA/Battered Women's Shelters, VOCA
- Outreach and services in rural areas → Rural Grants Program (VAWA), VOCA

KEY POINTS

- Thank you for supporting programs dedicated to ending violence against women.
- VAWA, FVPSA, and the VOCA Fund support lifesaving programs that have been at the core of our community's response to domestic and sexual violence for over a decade.
- Due to the successes of VAWA, FVPSA and VOCA programs and the improved response of the criminal justice system, more victims are seeking help than ever before.
- Tell your story (see sidebar).
- VAWA programs are a good investment – they save lives and money. VAWA '94 saved taxpayers at least \$14.8 billion in net averted social costs in its first 6 years. VOCA uses no taxpayer money!
- Ending domestic and sexual violence by supporting these successful and cost-effective programs must be a priority. Increasing funding for VAWA and FVPSA and raising the VOCA cap will save lives and prevent many other social problems.

If Congressional staff have more questions, they can contact Allison Randall, Public Policy Director, National Network to End Domestic Violence, at 202-543-5566 or allison@nnev.org.

SAMPLE LETTER TO CONGRESS FOR LOCAL PROGRAMS: VAWA, FVPSA and VOCA APPROPRIATIONS

If possible, use your organizational letterhead. **Download an editable MS Word version of this letter at: www.nnedv.org/funding**

[Date]

The Honorable [First Name Last Name]
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

OR United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear [Senator/Representative LastName]:

Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking directly affect at least 1 in 4 women in the United States and touch the lives of nearly all individuals. Funding through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund has helped provide services for victims, and each year we see more victims come forward for help. Yet, devastating funding cuts in the FY 2008 Congressional Budget have hampered our ability to respond and the President's Budget for FY 2009 proposes funding cuts that will destroy services for victims. **On behalf of [who your organization serves/represents, such as "battered women in Chicago, Illinois"] we urge you to support funding for local domestic violence programs in the FY '09 Congressional Budget.**

[Insert information, statistics, and/or stories describing the need for increased/continued VAWA, FVPSA and VOCA funding in YOUR community. If you have seen an increased demand for services, have statistics on the number of victims who sought services this year, or have had to cut back on services or turn victims away due to lack of resources, talk about it. You can use your state statistics from the DV Census: www.nnedv.org/census/states/]

VAWA programs in the Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS) budget are at the core of our response to victims and must be fully funded at \$320 million. Of particular priority for our agency is **FVPSA/Battered Women's Shelters**, which provides lifesaving emergency services for victims and families who are fleeing abuse. *[Discuss the number of women and children you served in shelter, transitional housing, and other direct services last year.]*

[Tell a success story or a story about a victim you have helped, for example: "Last year 'Maria' arrived at our shelter covered in bruises and bleeding and holding her 18 month old son. After years of abuse, she decided to leave her husband and had no where else to turn for help. While staying in our shelter, Maria was able to work with an attorney to file for divorce and enroll in our job training program. Maria dreams of having a safe home where she and her son can live in peace and we are working with her to make that dream possible.] **To ensure that victims have access to these lifesaving services, we ask you to support funding the FVPSA/Battered Women's Shelter program at \$175 million in the FY '09 Congressional Budget.**

In the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) budget a critical priority is the VOCA Fund, a key non-taxpayer funded source of support for service that help victims cope with the trauma and aftermath of violent crime. In the wake of the devastating cuts to VOCA in the FY '08 budget, it is essential that Congress protect VOCA-funded services. Unfortunately, the President's Budget again proposes eliminating the balance of the VOCA Fund. The President's FY '09 budget also proposes a crippling \$120 million cut in funding and the creation of a block grant for VAWA programs in the CJS budget. Cuts to VAWA and VOCA programs in the FY '08 Congressional Budget, combined with decreased funding at the state and local level, have already crippled services.

Without full funding for VAWA programs, women and children in [your city and/or state] cannot access the services they need to escape from violence. If the cap on the VOCA fund is not increased and VAWA programs are not funded, counties across the state may lose these services entirely. Without the lifesaving services provided by these programs, victims and their families will live in danger and costly crimes will continue.

In the FY '09 Congressional Budget we urge you to support full funding for VAWA programs at \$320 million in the LHHS budget and \$683 million in the CJS budget, protect the balance of the VOCA Fund and raise the VOCA Fund cap to \$717 million. With your help, [your program name] and other domestic violence programs nationwide can continue to help victims and their children find safety and security and build self-sufficiency.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact [your name and program]. We look forward to working with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,
Your Name, Organization, and Address/Contact Information