



For more information:

Tralonne Shorter
202.543.5566 x 105
tshorter@nnev.org

or

Joy Braun
202.543.5555 x 118
jbraun@nnev.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SUPPORTS THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VOLUNTEER ATTORNEY NETWORK ACT

(August 14, 2008) *Washington, DC* – Sue Else, President of the National Network to End Domestic Violence, applauds Congressional efforts to pass the National Domestic Violence Volunteer Attorney Network Act (S. 1515/H.R. 6088), a bipartisan bill sponsored by Senators Joseph Biden (D-DE) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) in the Senate along with Representatives John Conyers (D-MI) and Ted Poe (R-TX) in the House of Representatives. The bill would create a cadre of skilled attorneys providing free legal services to victims of domestic violence. Both bills await action by the full Senate and House.

“While great strides have been made toward ending violence against women through the Violence of Against Women Act, which has led to increased public awareness and an improved criminal justice response to these crimes; there remain significant barriers for victims escaping domestic violence. Free legal services to domestic violence victims help balance the scales of justice. Our nation cannot afford to fail those seeking refuge from domestic violence. Policy makers and advocates for victims of domestic violence must work in partnership to end the cycle of violence. It is imperative that Congress pass the National Domestic Violence Volunteer Attorney Network Act and secure justice for the thousands of domestic violence victims and families that come forward for help each day.”

Domestic Violence is a crisis of epidemic proportion that affects one in four American women in her lifetime and costs the nation an estimated \$5.8 billion annually in medical costs. Research suggests that over 15.5 million children are exposed to domestic violence each year which can affect academic development and increase the likelihood of being a victim and/or abuser. According to the National Census of Domestic Violence Services, in a single day in 2007, over 53,000 women, men and children in America sought support from local domestic violence programs. Those programs also answered 20,582 Hotline calls and trained 29,902 community members as advocates. Although the second most frequent reason victims called the Hotline is to

request legal assistance, it is estimated that less than 1 out of 5 low-income victims of domestic violence ever seek legal representation because they cannot afford to pay attorney fees. According to the American Bar Association, legal services currently provide counsel to an estimated 170,000 low-income domestic violence victims each year - leaving the majority of the estimated 1 million victims of domestic violence without legal assistance.

ABOUT THE NATIONAL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VOLUNTEER ATTORNEY NETWORK ACT

The National Domestic Violence Volunteer Attorney Network Act will enhance access to legal services for victims of domestic violence by:

- Mandating a Government Accountability Office study on the scope and quality of legal services available to victims of domestic violence across the country and issue a report to Congress within a year;
- Creating a National Domestic Violence Volunteer Attorney Network Referral Project to be managed by the American Bar Association Commission on Domestic Violence in partnership with other national domestic violence and pro bono organizations, including the National Domestic Violence Hotline;
- Authorizing a Pilot Program to establish the National Attorney Network in five states; which would then be followed in two years by a National Rollout; and
- Establishing a National Domestic Violence Legal Advisory Task Force to provide ongoing guidance regarding the network.

ABOUT NNEDV

The National Network to End Domestic Violence Fund (NNEDV) is a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization dedicated to providing public education, training and technical assistance to maintain and develop the professional expertise of advocates working to end domestic violence. NNEDV strives to strengthen advocates as organizers and activists in the tradition of social change movements. For more information, please visit www.nnedv.org.

###