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Justice Department Applauds Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act

Attorney General Merrick B. Garland, Deputy Attorney General Lisa O. Monaco, and Associate Attorney General Vanita Gupta today applauded the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA was reauthorized as part of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2022, which President Joe Biden signed into law this week.

“Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking are serious violations of criminal law that demand our sustained attention and action,” said Attorney General Garland.

“The Department of Justice welcomes the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and will continue to use the resources at our disposal to prevent and respond to gender-based violence and provide critical services for survivors.”

“One of the many achievements of this bipartisan reauthorization of VAWA is recognizing expanded jurisdiction for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes to protect their communities from domestic and sexual violence, which I highlighted as a priority in my testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee last October,” said Deputy Attorney General Monaco.

“It is fitting that this important legislation was passed during Women’s History Month, as it will help combat the epidemic levels of gender-based violence that stand in the way of equality in our society. We have made substantial progress since I worked on the original VAWA in Congress in the 1990s, but VAWA’s programs, protections, and new initiatives remain critical to address unmet needs in our communities.”

“VAWA’s reauthorization helps ensure all survivors can live safe and healthy lives, free from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual violence, and stalking,” said Associate Attorney General Gupta. “Preventing and ending violence creates a more equal and equitable world for women and girls, and people of all genders who experience harm.

I look forward to working with the Office on Violence Against Women to implement and administer new programs and services that support underserved communities.”

In addition to recognizing expanded jurisdiction for American Indian and Alaska Native tribes, the VAWA reauthorization addresses numerous Department of Justice priorities, including:

- Reauthorizing until 2027 VAWA's vitally important grant programs, which will allow communities to provide critical services to survivors, as well as the right tools and training to make sure that responses to these crimes are survivor-centered and trauma-informed.
- Increasing services and support for underserved populations, including culturally specific communities, LGBTQ survivors, individuals with disabilities, immigrant survivors, older adults, and victims in rural communities, among others.
- Closing gaps in federal sex crimes statutes and promoting accountability for law enforcement officers, by strengthening the ability to prosecute federal officers who sexually assault or abuse those in their custody, and by appropriately penalizing defendants who commit civil rights offenses involving sexual misconduct, which includes those who commit sexual assault while acting under color of law and those who commit sexual assault as part of a hate crime.
- Enhancing efforts to reduce homicides through enforcement of federal and state firearms laws, including by enacting the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Denial Notification Act to help state law enforcement investigate and prosecute unlawful firearms purchasers and amending the Gun Control Act to make clear that the firearm prohibitions apply to domestic violence offenders convicted under municipal ordinances.
- Improving access to justice for survivors by expanding grant funding for legal services and authorizing post-conviction legal assistance to survivors in matters arising out of their domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or sex trafficking victimization.

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