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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
July 13, 2006

Victims of Sexual Assault One Step Closer to Federal Aid

U.S. Senate Committee Approves Funding for Sexual Assault Services Program

Washington, D.C. (July 13, 2006) – Help may be on the way to our nation’s rape crisis centers. The first dedicated federal funding stream for services to victims of sexual assault took one step closer to becoming a reality today when a Senate Committee approved \$5 million for the Sexual Assault Services Program (SASP).

Lifetime Television, the National Alliance to End Sexual Assault and the National Center for Victims of Crime applaud the dedication of U.S. Senators Richard Shelby (R-AL) and Barbara Mikulski (D-MD) as well as the leadership of Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA) for including \$5 million in the Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations bill for SASP.

Authorized as part of the Violence Against Women’s Act (VAWA) of 2005, SASP will provide rape crisis centers, state sexual assault coalitions, Tribes and culturally specific organizations with desperately needed funding for vital services to all victims of sexual violence as they navigate the medical, criminal justice, and social service systems.

“I can’t stress enough how meaningful the actions taken by Senators Shelby, Mikulski and Specter are to support the Sexual Assault Services Program,” said Marybeth Carter, President, National Alliance to End Sexual Violence. “Shelby, Mikulski and Specter demonstrated amazing leadership in conveying to their colleagues the importance and need for this program. Due to their efforts, thousands of women, men and children dealing with the repercussions of sexual violence will receive services.”

“We applaud Senators Shelby, Mikulski, and Specter for supporting this critical program to provide much-needed services to sexual assault survivors,” said Mary Lou Leary, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime. “Funding the Sexual Assault Services Program in this tough fiscal year sends the message that supporting rape victims is a national priority.”

“A recent Lifetime Women's Pulse Poll showed that ending violence against women is the #1 issue of concern for women,” said Meredith Wagener, executive vice president of Public Affairs, Lifetime Television. “On behalf of the women in the more than 90 million homes Lifetime reaches across the country, many of whom specifically urged Congress to take action on this issue, we join the National Center and the NAESV in applauding Senators Shelby, Mikulski and Specter for their efforts to address and prevent sexual assault.”

SASP has had a long road to this point with many supporters along the way. In June, the U.S. House of Representatives passed their version of this funding bill that also provides \$5 million to SASP. Seventy-eight (78) Members of Congress signed a Dear Colleague letter in support of funding for the program.

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National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) works to end sexual violence and ensure services for victims of sexual assault. The NAESV Board of Directors consists of leaders of state sexual assault coalitions and national law, policy, and tribal experts who promote the organization's mission to advance and strengthen public policy on behalf of state coalitions, individuals, and other entities working to end sexual violence. For more information, <http://www.naesv.org>

The National Center for Victims of Crime is dedicated to forging a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives. The National Center's toll-free helpline, 1-800-FYI-CALL, offers supportive counseling, practical information about crime and victimization, referrals to local community resources, as well as skilled advocacy in the criminal justice and social service systems.