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As you know, April is Sexual As-

Sexual Assault Awareness Month

sault Awareness Month (SAAM). Across the country, rape crisis centers, sexual assault coalitions, community-based organizations, health departments, and allied professionals are organizing events and activities to focus attention on efforts to end sexual violence and to provide competent and compassionate services for victims. In addition to increasing the awareness of the general public, SAAM also provides a unique opportunity to urge lawmakers to make VAWA reauthorization a top priority.

Along with our partner organizations in the fight against sexual assault, NAESV is planning a briefing on Capitol Hill, hosted by the Congressional Women's Caucus, in late April to highlight VAWA and its specific impact on sexual assault. The event will include discussion of campus responses, rape prevention education, SART grants and the proposed Sexual Assault Services Act (SASA), which we hope to be included in VAWA 2005.

We encourage you to use this month to highlight in your own community the successes of VAWA in preventing sexual assault, assisting victims, and punishing offenders. Please tell your Members of Congress that reauthorizing VAWA with key improvements is critical for your community.

Here are some ideas and tools to help you in your efforts.

- Invite your elected officials (Members of Congress, Attorney General, Governor) and their staffs to your community's Sexual Assault Awareness Month activities to show their support for your work as well as VAWA reauthorization.
- Write letters to your elected officials about the need to reauthorize VAWA.
- Write an op-ed for submission to your local paper about how VAWA has benefited your community and what would happen if you no longer had VAWA funds to support your work.
- Ask public officials (such as your State's Attorney General, local prosecutor or police chief) and victim advocates to contact Congress

For SAAM user-friendly resources, go to www.naesv.org and www.nsvrc.org.

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VAWA Update

As of April 8, no legislation to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act has been introduced. In the Senate, Senators Joe Biden (D-DE) and Arlen Specter (R-PA) are currently working together to introduce a bipartisan bill, based in large part on the proposal put forth by the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women (National Task Force). We hope this will occur in mid-late April. We expect the Senate Judiciary Committee to hold a hearing on VAWA in late May and have reached out to local advocates and rape crisis center directors to potentially speak at the hearing.

In the House of Representatives, Rep. Mark Green (R-WI) is taking the lead, and working closely with the House Judiciary Committee staff to draft a bill. We are hopeful that this bill will eventually be a bi-partisan effort as well. The challenge remains to convince Judiciary Committee James Sensenbrenner (R-WI) to make VAWA reauthorization a top priority this year.

As advocates - in Washington and across the country – our main message to Congress is that time is running out! VAWA needs to be reauthorized with key improvements. It is critical that bills be introduced as soon as possible, because VAWA expires on Sept. 30, 2005.

On March 29, the National Task Force hosted a briefing with the Congressional House Women's Caucus to give staffers an update on the VAWA reauthorization, including the most recent summary, ways in which the Women's Caucus Members can be involved, and potential future events. National Task Force members are working hard to follow-up and meet with each of the 68 members of the caucus.

NAESV Board Member Testifies at Appropriations Hearing

NAESV is proud to announce that Staci Kitchen, Secretary of the NAESV Board and Executive Director of the Ohio Coalition on Sexual Assault, testified as a public witness on April 14 in front of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services and Education. Staci told Members of Congress exactly why Rape Prevention Education funds are so important and why Congress should increase those funds in Fiscal Year 2006. Not only was this great exposure for Staci and NAESV, but it is a highly coveted opportunity.

Congressional Victim's Rights Caucus' Inaugural Meeting

On April 1, the Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus held its inaugural meeting to educate Congressional staffers on the Crime Victim's Fund (VOCA) and garner support for the newly formed Caucus, which is co-chaired by Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX) and Rep. Katherine Harris (R-FL). Congressman Poe's Legislative Assistant, Trey Hicks, talked about his boss' commitment to victims of crime and his eagerness to work with the national victim assistance organizations, including NAESV. He urged the approximately 30 other congressional staffers in the room to encourage their bosses to join the Caucus.

Robert Roper, President of the Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center; Caroll Ann Ellis, Director of Victim Services for the Fairfax (Virginia) County Police Department; and Mike Lynch, Chief of Police, George Mason University and President of the National Organization of Victim Assistance, talked about the impact of the proposed VOCA rescission on victim assistance programs. They all emphasized that the loss of these funds would not only mean less services for victims, but job losses as well – in police departments, in prosecutors offices and in victim assistance agencies.

Steve Derene, Executive Director of the National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators, gave the staff an overview of VOCA and how the funds are collected and distributed. He explained the need for the \$500 million cap, as well as the need for the remaining funds, which are not a "surplus" but rather a "rainy day fund" for future years where there are not big settlements that cushion the fund. He also pointed out that if it wasn't for the cap, victim assistance groups could use more than all of the funds available, so none of the money should ever be considered a "surplus" or "extra." Using excerpts from law and congressional reports, he provided evidence that the \$500 million cap is merely a "management" tool and that Congress has always intended for all deposits to the fund to be retained for victim's services. Allison Randall, from the National Network to End Domestic Violence, noted that even the threat that these funds might be eliminated has caused some cuts in programs

Help Us Spread Our Message

Advocates in the field of sexual assault and domestic violence are ramping up efforts on several critical issues of concern to state sexual assault coalitions. This includes communicating with Congress on the importance of reauthorization of VAWA with key improvements; increasing funds for Rape Prevention Education (RPE); saving the VOCA Fund and saving the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant (PHHSBG) with the sex offense set aside.

Last month, NAESV sent letters to the House and Senate Budget Committees asking them to reject the Administration's proposal to eliminate the Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant. We have also had meetings with Senator Arlen Specter's staff regarding RPE funding and saving the PHHSBG. In addition, NAESV is an active member of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women and are involved in numerous outreach meetings on Capitol Hill.

Your participation is critical! We will only be heard in Congress if local and state sexual assault centers take action by emailing letters and making calls to their legislators in Washington. The leaders in Washington are moved to action by the constituents who live in their districts. Although national organizations sound a unified voice, it is the local and statewide agency that the legislator is ultimately accountable to.

For that reason, we are asking you to mobilize – the strength of NAESV is our grassroots. Please visit <http://www.naevs.org/alertcenter.html> to download the following materials.

1. **Send an action alert to your local rape crisis centers:** We have drafted an action alert that will give crucial information to your local rape crisis centers on activities they can take to move the VAWA reauthorization forward.
2. **Put an article in agency newsletters:** We have drafted an article you can place in your agency newsletters that will give crucial information to your local rape crisis centers on activities they can take to move the VAWA reauthorization forward.
3. **Fax or email a letter to your member of Congress:** It is critical that all members of Congress hear how important federal funds are to the sexual assault prevention and victim service agencies in their districts.

In particular, individuals in key states need to hear our voice. This includes: Illinois (Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert (R-IL)); Ohio (Rep. Deborah Pryce (R-OH) who is in the House Republican Leadership); Wisconsin (Judiciary Committee Chairman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI)); and Florida (Rep. Ginny Brown Waite (R-FL), Co-Chair of the Women's Caucus; and Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL), Co-Vice-Chair of Women's Caucus). These Republican leaders in the House can really make a difference. Our key message points are:

- With only five short months remaining until VAWA expires, the clock is ticking on women's lives.
- We urge you to act now to make the reauthorization of VAWA with some key improvements a top priority.

What counts most is the actual number of letters on letterhead that the legislators receive. We know most of you don't have time to rewrite letters or to add statistics or information about your local program. With our new web site, you can simply download letters, insert your organization name, put the letter on letterhead and fax or email it. This is a vital contribution to the nationwide effort.

On the NAESV website, we have three different letters you can download and send to your Senators or Representative.

1. The first discusses the importance of VAWA reauthorization with key improvements and should be sent to all members of Congress.
2. The second letter makes the case that the Preventive Health and Human Services Block Grant is important and needs to be funded rather than eliminated in the Fiscal Year 2006 budget. This should be sent to all members of Congress.
3. The third letter explains why the Crime Victims Fund (VOCA) is so important and urges Congress not to go along with the President's proposal, and should be sent to members of the Appropriations Committee that deal with the Department of Justice.

Please visit <http://www.naevs.org/alertcenter.html> to download and send these letters.

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The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV), formerly the National Alliance of Sexual Assault Coalitions, is a social change organization dedicated to creating a social, political and economic environment where sexual violence no longer exists. The NAESV Board of Directors consists of leaders of state sexual assault coalitions, law and policy experts who work to 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. Most importantly, the NAESV advocates on behalf of the victim/survivors—women, children and men—who have needlessly suffered the serious trauma of sexual violence and envisions a world free from sexual violence.

NAESV President Participates in Lifetime Television's "Stop the Violence Against Women"

Last month, NAESV President Marybeth Carter joined other advocates in the nation's capital to participate in Lifetime Television's "Stop the Violence Against Women Week." Marybeth attended a special screening of Lifetime's new documentary, "Terror at Home: Domestic Violence in America," and the Champions for Change reception, which paid tribute to the athletes, musicians, and other male and female stars who have worked to stop violence against women. Marybeth also met with several Congressional staff to discuss sexual assault-related policy issues, the upcoming VAWA reauthorization and spoke on a panel briefing Congress on the achievements of the Violence Against Women Act over the past ten years.

NAESV Welcomes New Board Members and Officers

NAESV is pleased to announce the following five new board members: Sarah Deer, Tribal Law and Policy Institute; Lisa Brabo, First5 LA; Gina McClard, National Crime Victim Law Institute and North-Western School of Law, Lewis and Clark College; Annette Burrhus-Clay, Texas Association Against Sexual Assault; and Terri Poore, Florida Council Against Sexual Violence. We thank each of these leaders for dedicating their time and expertise to the NAESV's national efforts.

These new NAESV Board Members join the current board, which recently elected new officers: President Marybeth Carter, California Coalition Against Sexual Assault; Vice President Monika Hostler Johnson, North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault; Secretary Staci Kitchen, Ohio Coalition Against Sexual Assault, and Treasurer Gail Burns Smith, at large member. The board is completed with Polly Poskin, Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault; Elizabeth Barnhill, Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault; and Michelle Anderson, Villanova School of Law.

NAESV Launches New Web site and Logo

NAESV urges you to visit our new Web site at www.naesv.org. We are in the process of posting content on the site, but look forward to using the site as a tool to better communicate with you and provide you the resources you need to mobilize your grassroots network and communicate our messages effectively to policymakers at the state and national levels. With the new website and branding complete, NAESV is better positioned than ever to advocate on behalf of state sexual assault coalitions, rape crisis and rape prevention programs as well as allied professionals to promote better policies, programs and legislation on behalf of victim survivors of sexual assault.