

Floor Statement on H. Con. Res. 330
Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month
Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin
April 30, 2008

Thank you, Mr. / Madame Speaker.

Studies show that one in six women and one in thirty-three men will be a victim of rape or attempted rape in their lifetime and that on average, a person is sexually assaulted in the U.S. every two-and-a-half minutes. In my state of Wisconsin, there were 5,628 sexual assaults reported in 2004, the last year statistics are available. This marks a 3.7 percent increase from 2003.

Nationwide, we know that children and young adults are most at risk – 44 percent of sexual assault victims are under the age of 18 and 80 percent are under the age of 30.

Although most victims are younger women, the effects of sexual assault cut across all racial, social, religious, ethnic, and economic boundaries. Whether the crime is rape, incest, child sexual abuse, stalking or sexual harassment, sexual assault impacts our schools, our workplace, our streets and our homes. Survivors are our sons, our daughters, our brothers, sisters, friends and grandparents.

In addition to the physical effects of victimization, the emotional scars felt by sexual assault survivors may persist long after these physical scars have healed. Sexual violence costs an estimated \$127 billion per year in medical expenses, lost productivity, treatment of psychological trauma, and pain and suffering.

Yet we know that only 41 percent of sexual assault survivors pursue prosecution by reporting their attack to law enforcement officials, and despite the support services offered by the National Sexual Assault Hotline and more than 1,000 crisis centers nationwide, fewer than 50 percent of survivors ever tell anyone about their experience.

These statistics are staggering and unconscionable. Despite the alarming prevalence of sexual assault, there is a clear and significant need for more public education and awareness.

The National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month does just this. Celebrated each year in April, this dedicated month provides a special opportunity to educate Americans about sexual violence and to encourage the prevention of sexual assault, the improved treatment of its survivors, and the prosecution of its perpetrators.

As part of the National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month, we recognize national and community organizations, as well as private sector supporters, for their work in promoting awareness about sexual assault. We also applaud public safety, law enforcement, and health professionals for their hard work and innovative strategies to increase the percentage of sexual assault cases that result in the prosecution and incarceration of the offenders.

Along with my colleague Ted Poe from Texas, I introduced H. Con. Res. 330 to recognize April 2008 as the National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month. By supporting this resolution, we highlight the efforts of individuals and agencies that provide rape crisis intervention and prevention services. We also call attention to sexual violence as a major public health issue and raise awareness of the need for increased resources for preventing sexual violence.

Mr. / Madame Speaker, I want to quickly extend my thanks to a number of advocates for their work on sexual assault prevention. In Wisconsin, we are incredibly lucky to have the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault working to create the social change necessary to end sexual violence. My thanks to the Coalition and their member organizations across the state for the important work you do.

Since the first national observation of Sexual Assault Awareness Month in 2001, many Members of Congress have been actively involved in ensuring Congressional support for efforts to raise awareness around sexual violence. I wholeheartedly thank all the cosponsors of this bi-partisan resolution for once again lending their name to this worthy cause.

And finally, I want to extend my sincerest thanks to my colleague, Ted Poe, for his strong support as the lead sponsor of this resolution. Mr. Poe has been a dedicated advocate for victims' rights in this Congress and I have very much admired his commitment to ending sexual violence in all forms. Thank you for your work and leadership on this resolution.

Although we have made significant progress, we still have far to go in eradicating the harm inflicted on our communities by sexual assault. I urge all of my colleagues to fully support this resolution recognizing the National Sexual Assault Awareness and Prevention Month.

Thank you.