

to enforce the Do-Not-Call Registry is a victory for Americans who want to reduce the nuisance of unwanted telephone solicitations. The American people have the right to limit annoying telemarketing calls, and I am pleased that both the Federal Trade Commission and the Federal Communications Commission will now be able to ensure that Americans have that choice while the courts continue to consider the issues.

Remarks on Domestic Violence Prevention

October 8, 2003

President Bush. Thank you all for coming, and welcome to the White House. In a few moments, I will sign a proclamation naming October National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. I do so to focus attention on this urgent and very important issue. I will announce two initiatives we are launching to combat domestic violence in our country.

A home, a family, should be a place of support, should be a peaceful place, not a place of cruelty and brutality. Domestic violence betrays the most basic duties of life. It violates the law. It's wrong. It is a crime that must be confronted by individuals, by communities, and by government.

All of you here today have taken up the vital cause—the really important cause—of defending the vulnerable from domestic violence. Too often its victims suffer in secret and in silence. You make it easier for them to step out of the shadows and get the help and love they need. Your compassion is saving lives. Your country is grateful. Thank you for what you do.

I appreciate Tommy Thompson being here. He's the Secretary of Health and Human Services. Many of the initiatives on family violence come from his Department. As Governor of Wisconsin, he made a name for dealing with domestic violence, and he's carried his passion, as have I, to Washington, DC, to help.

I appreciate Jack Potter, who is the Postmaster General. There's a reason he is here. It has something to do with a stamp that I'll be describing here. *[Laughter]*

I appreciate very much Diane Stuart, the Director of the Office of Violence Against Women, from the Department of Justice. Thank you for coming. Thank you for being a leader.

We've got a special Senator here with us today, a person who flew all the way back from his home State of Colorado. He's here because he sponsored the legislation creating the Stop Family Violence stamp. I'm honored that you've come back, Senator Campbell. Ben Nighthorse Campbell is a compassionate, decent human being, and I'm proud to call him friend. Thanks for coming.

I want to thank Sheryl Cates, who is the executive director of the National Domestic Violence Hotline and the Texas Council on Family Violence. She's on the stage with me. The hotline received its one millionth call in August. That's a lot of calls, but it's a lot of help as well. And I want to thank Sheryl for being here, my fellow Texan. *[Laughter]* Lynn Rosenthal is the executive director of the National Network to End Domestic Violence. Lynn is with us as well here. Thank you for coming. And Rita Smith, the executive director of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, is on the stage as well. These three women are leaders in the attempt to make somebody's life better, and I really appreciate you all coming.

As well we've got Monique Blais who's with us today. Monique brought her mother, Marci, to the White House. *[Laughter]* The reason Monique is here is that she designed the artwork for the Stop Family Violence stamp. And I really appreciate your talents, and when people see the stamp, they'll—when I say “talent,” they'll know what I mean when I say “talent,” because it's really a great piece of work. We want to thank you for coming. And I want to thank you all for being here.

Domestic violence cuts across every line of geography and income. Abuse is found in every community in our country—every community—and it must be fought in every community. Hundreds of thousands of incidents of domestic violence are reported every year. The sad news is, many go unreported. About a third of women murdered each year in America are killed by this type of violence, and nearly half the households

where domestic violence occurs also has a child under 12 years old. There's more than one victim.

Women and children are facing dangers in this country, and they need strong allies. That's what we're here to talk about. I'm not only here to thank you for being strong allies, I'm asking others around our country to work with the people here. There's plenty of opportunities for our fellow citizens to step forth and be a partner in helping save and heal lives.

Fortunately, there are people, victims who can find help. That's the good news about America. The bad news is, there's too much domestic violence. The good news is, people can find help. Faith-based and community groups provide refuge and counseling and good legal advice. And a lot of time, an abused woman needs good, solid legal advice.

Industry groups are recycling old cell phones. It's an interesting contribution, isn't it? They're saying, "Here's an opportunity for you to be able to call to get help."

Lifetime television—I know some folks representing Lifetime television are here—is promoting domestic violence awareness in its programming and public service campaigns, and we thank you for that. Part of making sure that we help save lives is to educate people about the opportunities available.

Business Strengthening America is a private organization of business leaders who are responding to a call I gave them earlier, after September the 11th. I said, "Why don't you become an active participant, as responsible business leaders, in helping meet our society's needs?" They've joined forces with the Corporate Alliance to End Partner Violence. Those two groups are working to raise awareness of the issues in the workplace, and as importantly, they're encouraging employees to become volunteers in the efforts to help those who have been abused.

I want to thank the responsible corporate leaders in America for hearing the call that in a responsible society, you've got to behave responsibly yourself and encourage others to follow their heart.

The fight against domestic violence is a national movement. I urge people to join the movement. Part of an awareness month is not only making people aware but a call to

service. Today all of us up here are calling people to service, to serve your community and your country. If you want to love your neighbor like you'd like to be loved yourself, there's ample opportunity to do so in the fight against domestic violence.

Our Government is engaged in the fight, as it should be. Government has got a duty to treat domestic violence as a serious crime. It's part of our duty. If you treat something as a serious crime, then there must be serious consequences. Otherwise, it's not very serious. Last year, Federal prosecutors for violence against women crimes increased—Federal prosecutions increased by 35 percent. Our prosecutors are doing their job. They're finding the abusers, and they're throwing the book at them. And that's important.

People who commit crimes must understand with certainty, there is a consequence. One way to change behavior is to make it clear to people in our society, if you break the law, if you beat up a woman, if you abuse your wife, you will be held to account. There must be certainty in the law, and we must have prosecutors who understand that we expect them to be tough. And they are.

The administration has also increased funding for Justice Department's Violence Against Women's programs by \$100 million this year. We're now spending money at the highest levels in our Nation's history, and it's money well spent. Programs which help local communities combat domestic violence and sexual assault and stalking and helps the victims of those crimes are now funded at \$390 million a year. And I want to thank Ben and the Members of the Congress for working to see that our appropriations request was met.

I'm going to talk about two other measures that I think will help in the fight against domestic violence. First, I've directed \$20 million in 2004 to help communities create family justice centers, where victims of domestic violence can find the services they need in one place, one central location. Too often, the services designed to help victims are uncoordinated and scattered throughout communities.

Imagine what it would be like if you were an abused person trying to find help, and you

went from one place to another. With laws and police and all the rules and regulations of a free society, it must be confusing and disheartening. The victim has been so traumatized, and then she has to tell her story over and over again, which repeats the trauma. There's a better way to do this. There's a better way to help people who need help in our society.

San Diego figured it out. They've got a city attorney named Casey Gwinn—who's right there—who recognized that there's a more compassionate way to help people who have been abused. And so he did something about it. He created what's called the San Diego Family Justice Center. It's a full-service center for domestic violence victims, where police officers and prosecutors and probation officers and civil attorneys and counselors and doctors and victims advocates and chaplains all come together to help somebody. The runaround is over in San Diego. There's a central location where somebody who desperately needs help can find compassion and help. Victims can pick up food vouchers. They can get help with transportation. They can file for a temporary restraining order against their abusers. They can sign up for supervised visitation programs to keep their children safe. They can get their cell phone there. They can find help.

The San Diego Family Justice Center opened a year ago. It has already served thousands of victims. They tell me the story of Caitlin Effgen, who is a brave woman who lives in San Diego. It's probably, unfortunately, a typical story I'm about to tell you. What's atypical is that she found help in a brand new way of helping victims of domestic violence. Her boyfriend started hitting her. She tried to break up with him, and he began to stalk her. In other words, he was not only abusing her one way, he decided to abuse her another as well. And she went to the authorities and got a restraining order, which, as the experts will tell you, sometimes it works and sometimes it didn't, because in her case, the boyfriend continued to harass her, just wouldn't leave her alone. You can imagine the fear she felt. He pled guilty to charges, but he still stalked and haunted her mind.

And then she discovered the center. They helped her get counseling. They got another restraining order. A victims advocate joined her and her dad in court. In other words, she got all the help she needed. I can imagine the relief that she must have felt when somebody who heard the call to love a neighbor did just that. The guy ended up in—behind bars, which was the right thing to do, and I congratulate the San Diego law enforcement officers. But more important, she got to remember what life was like without her misery. Those are her words, not mine. She found compassion.

The funding I've set aside will help begin a national movement toward more of these centers. Twelve will be funded through this initiative. When they work, there's another twelve and maybe even more. Maybe we can escalate the request. But the point is, we have found what can work in order to provide efficient help, to channel the compassion so somebody can get their life back together. So I want to thank you for coming, Casey. Good job. You're doing your duty as a public servant.

The second initiative will expand the good work of community and faith-based groups as they provide counseling and mentoring and other services to children who have witnessed domestic violence. The children who witness domestic violence are prone to depression and anxiety. That's natural. You could imagine what it would be like for a little child to witness such an act. They need help and love. We have a moral obligation in our society to help relieve the suffering and to show that there is a better life.

I like to remind people, you know, that—I wish Government could make people love one another. I would sign the piece of legislation. *[Laughter]* But I know that there are loving people who are willing to love. It's a—by the way, a lot of times it's from a higher law; it's not the law of government. And so what we want to do is spend \$5 billion—\$5 million this year on initiatives—*[laughter]*—a million here, a million there. *[Laughter]* Let's start small—what do you think—*[laughter]*—to start an initiative called Safe and Bright Futures for Children. That's what we want to start. The Department of Health and Human Services will provide funding to

community and faith-based groups to help children escape the cycle of violence, to get counseling, to get mentoring, to become involved in healthy activities like sports or scouting or community services.

The money will support programs at sites all across America. We believe it will be—make a difference in lives. One such program is run by the Reverend Cheryle Albert, who is with us today. She works with Safe Haven Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence in Boston, Massachusetts. Probably rooting for the Red Sox, aren't you? [*Laughter*] She teaches congregations about domestic violence. She helps train them to help troubled families through crisis intervention and counseling. Here's what she says: "The power behind domestic violence is that it's a secret. We work with the faith community because we feel it's the best way to break the silence."

When men and women face violence and injustice, it is important for our Government to understand that oftentimes they turn to their churches or synagogues or mosques for help, as they should. These are places of love. They exist because of love. They are wise to do so, and our Government should not fear the faith-based programs which help save lives. Matter of fact, we ought to welcome the faith-based programs into helping people who suffer.

Oftentimes, it requires faith to help heal a heart and to help bring a bright future into some child's life. This initiative welcomes the faith-based programs all across our society. This initiative takes taxpayers' money to encourage faith-based programs to become important partners in the fight against domestic violence.

I am not the least bit hesitant to encourage our Government to use Federal tax money to rally the armies of compassion which exist in every society in America. We must not fear faith in America. We must welcome faith in America to help solve our problems.

Now, to the stamp. And the stamp will be placed out in the hall; you can see it on the

way out. The Safe and Bright Futures program will be supported by the sales of the stamp. There have been three such stamps. This is the third where the revenues collected from the sales of the stamps, designed by one of our Nation's budding artists— [*laughter*]—will be—will use that money. And as I understand it, the stamp is for sale today? That's why the head of the Post Office is here. [*Laughter*]

Audience member. Buy them.

President Bush. Buy them? Well, and so anybody who wants to support effective programs in our fight against domestic violence ought to buy the stamp. The money goes to these programs, and it's a great way for people to use the mail and to express their desires to make their communities a better place.

I want to thank you all for coming today. I want to thank you for your commitment. For those who are involved with saving lives, it's a hard job. It's got to be hard to provide a shoulder onto which someone can cry or a sympathetic ear for some child who wonders what their future is like. That can only be accomplished, however, when loving Americans hear the call. If any American is interested in serving, one good way to do so is to become involved in these programs that are saving lives as a result of the brutal crime of domestic violence.

The strength of our country is not our military. It's not our wallet. The strength of our country is the heart and soul of the American people. And today I'm honored to be in the presence of Americans who serve your country and your community by helping people who have been hurt.

May God bless your work. May God bless those who are victims of domestic violence. And may God continue to bless our country. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:13 p.m. in the East Room at the White House.

Proclamation 7717—National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, 2003

October 8, 2003

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Across our country, domestic violence traumatizes victims, endangers children, harms families, and threatens communities. According to the most recent report from the Department of Justice, there were almost 700,000 incidents of domestic violence in 2001. Approximately one-third of women who are murdered each year are killed by their current or former husband or partner. Children who are subjected to domestic violence too often grow up to inflict violence on others, creating a cycle of violence that must be stopped. During National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we renew our Nation's commitment to prevent and punish the perpetrators of this despicable crime and bring hope and healing to those affected by it.

In some communities across our country, law enforcement, medical, and legal services for domestic violence victims are fragmented, requiring victims to travel to several different places to receive the help and treatment they need. Comprehensive service centers for domestic violence victims and their dependents enable health and justice professionals to better serve those in need. My Administration supports efforts to provide a wide variety of victim services in one location, including medical care, counseling and social services, law enforcement and legal resources, faith-based services, employment assistance, and housing assistance.

Local nonprofit and faith-based programs and their volunteers also offer critical assistance and support to victims in need—help that may not otherwise be available. In August of this year, the dedicated advocates at the Federally supported National Domestic Violence Hotline answered their one millionth call for help. Volunteers who want to help victims in the local community can find more information at the USA Freedom

Corps Volunteer Network (located at www.usafreedomcorps.gov).

My Administration is fighting domestic violence and strengthening services for victims and their dependents by supporting local and private efforts and securing historic levels of funding for the Violence Against Women programs at the Department of Justice. In fiscal year 2002, we spent \$390 million to prevent domestic violence and help victims, which represented an approximately \$100 million increase in funding. Since then, we have continued to provide a similar level of funding, and cities and towns across America are using this money to strengthen their responses to the victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. The Federal commitment to domestic violence has made it possible for women to seek relief from abuse and reclaim their dignity and their lives. Moreover, Federal prosecutions in cases involving violence against women increased by 35 percent in 2002.

Today is the first day of issue for the U.S. Postal Service Stop Family Violence postage stamp, which will raise money to support the national fight against domestic violence. On behalf of families and communities across America, I call on all citizens to help raise public awareness about how to prevent, recognize, and stop domestic violence. I applaud the commitment of all those who are helping to improve the lives of domestic violence survivors and their families. Working together, we can continue to find better solutions to this national problem.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim October 2003 as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. I urge all Americans to help victims of domestic violence and to work together to address this tragic problem.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eighth day of October, in the year of our Lord two thousand three, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-eighth.

George W. Bush