

States can increase cooperation. He noted that in the last meeting with the Alliance, the Cuban Department of Justice had asked for assistance in facilitating the placement of a U.S. Coast Guard representative to the U.S. Interest Section in Havana to help increase cooperation on drug interdiction. He thanked the Alliance for its assistance, noting with satisfaction that the U.S. Coast Guard representative had arrived in Havana. Mr. Diaz went on to describe the celebrated case of the "Limerick," a Belize-flagged vessel that began to sink in Cuban waters in 1996. The cooperation of British, American, and Cuban officials led to the discovery on the vessel of six tons of cocaine believed destined for the United States. The Cuban officials turned over the drugs and the persons involved to the U.S. authorities and actively assisted in the successful prosecution of the individuals traveling to the United States to testify in the criminal trial.

* * * * *

OBSERVATION

All the Cuban Government officials and the Cuban people with whom we visited were friendly and answered our questions in a forthright manner. They made it clear they have no ill feeling toward the American people or the U.S. form of government. They expressed bewilderment that the U.S. maintains its economic sanctions against Cuba despite other developments, including the normalization of U.S. trade relations with China, Vietnam, and North Korea, the increasing foreign investment in Cuba by the rest of the world (especially Europe and Canada), and the overwhelming U.S. public opinion in favor of removing the sanctions.

The Alliance is grateful for the opportunity to have concluded a second successful fact-finding mission to Cuba, and intends to continue this process. The Alliance is convinced that the U.S. trade restrictions must end and that we must deal with the Cuban Government as it is, not as we wish it to be.

THE NEED TO PASS THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, I want to take a moment to once again ask the majority to immediately bring S. 2787, the Violence Against Women Act of 2000, VAWA II, to the floor for a vote.

Yesterday the President wrote to the Majority Leader urging passage of VAWA II this week. This is a top priority not only for the Administration but for the Nation. The President wrote: "The Senate should not delay, and I urge you to pass a freestanding version of the Biden-Hatch VAWA reauthorization bill this week. The women and families whose lives have been scarred by domestic violence deserve nothing less than immediate action by the Congress." The President is right.

This Tuesday the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act by a vote of 415 to 3. I commend the House for finally acting on this important legislation. Many of us have been urging Senate action on legislation to reauthorize and improve the Violence Against Women Act for months. We have been stymied by the Republican leadership.

I also would like to thank my friend Senator JOE BIDEN, for his leadership

on this issue. He has been a champion for victims of domestic violence for many years. He was pivotal in the enactment of the Violence Against Women Act almost a decade ago. He has been tireless in his efforts this year. It is time for the Senate to take up S. 2787, review and accept the consensus substitute and move to final passage. It could be done this week—today. Senator BIDEN has offered to proceed on a clean bill within 10 minutes and he is right.

I regret to have to remind the Senate that the authorization for the original Violence Against Women Act, VAWA, expires at the end of this week on Saturday, September 30, 2000. This is outrageous. This should be consensus legislation, bipartisan legislation. With a straight up or down vote I have no doubt that our bill will pass overwhelmingly. Playing partisan or political games with this important legislation is the wrong thing to do and this is the wrong time to be playing such games.

"Gotcha" games have no place in this debate or with this important matter. The Violence Against Women Act II is not leverage or fodder but important legislation with 71 Senate co-sponsors.

There is and has been no objection on the Democratic side of the aisle to passing VAWA II. Unfortunately, there have been efforts by the majority party to attach this uncontroversial legislation to the "poison pill" represented by the version of bankruptcy legislation currently being advanced by Republicans and to other matters.

I received today a letter from the Pat Ruess of the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund that emphatically makes the point the VAWA is not "cover" for other legislation that hurts women. She is right. The bankruptcy bill as the Republicans have designed it is opposed by the National Partnership for Women and Families, the National Women's Law Center, the American Association of University Women and dozens of women's organization across the country. I hope that the rumors of such an effort by the Republican leadership will prove unfounded and that no such cynical pairing will be attempted. It is destined to fail and only delays and distracts the Senate from what we should be doing—passing VAWA II.

I believe the Senate can and should pass VAWA II as a clean, stand-alone bill, without further delay. That is what Senator BIDEN urged Tuesday.

According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, almost one-third of women murdered each year are killed by a husband or boyfriend. In 1998, women experience about 900,000 violent offenses at the hands of an intimate partner. The only good news about this staggering number is that it is lower than that of previous years when the number of violent offenses was well past 1 million. I have no doubt this drop in the numbers of victims of domestic violence is due

to the success of the programs of the Violence Against Women Act. We should be working to lower that number even further by reauthorizing and expanding the programs of VAWA. The country has come too far in fighting this battle against domestic violence to risk losing it because the Senate does not pass VAWA II or someone wanting to score clever, political points for short term partisan gain.

There is no reason to make this a political battle. We must act now.

I ask unanimous consent to print in the RECORD the President's letter and the September 28 letter from the NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund and a September 17, 1999 letter from the National Partnership for Women & Families, National Women's Law Center and other women's advocacy organizations.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

THE WHITE HOUSE,

Washington, DC, September 27, 2000.

Hon. TRENT LOTT,
Majority Leader, U.S. Senate,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. LEADER: I am writing to urge you to bring the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) to the Senate floor this week.

An estimated 900,000 women suffer violence at the hands of an intimate partner each year, demonstrating the urgent need for this legislation. Since VAWA was enacted, the Department of Justice and Health and Human Services have awarded approximately \$1.6 billion in Federal grants to support the work of prosecutors, law enforcement officials, the courts, victim advocates, health care and social service professionals, and intervention and prevention programs in order to combat violence against women. We must reauthorize these critical programs immediately.

As you know, yesterday, the House overwhelmingly passed VAWA reauthorization by a vote of 415-3. In the Senate, VAWA has similar bipartisan support with over 70 co-sponsors. If Congress does not act this week, however, VAWA's authorization will expire on September 30, 2000. The Senate should not delay, and I urge you to pass a freestanding version of the Biden-Hatch VAWA reauthorization bill this week. The women and families whose lives have been scarred by domestic violence deserve nothing less than immediate action by the Congress.

Sincerely,

BILL CLINTON.

NOW LEGAL DEFENSE
AND EDUCATION FUND,

Washington, DC, September 28, 2000.

DEAR SENATOR: The Violence Against Women Act runs out in two days. The Senate must act immediately! Do not let VAWA die—pass S. 2787, the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act. The bipartisan VAWA renewal bill, sponsored by Senators Biden and Hatch, has 71 co-sponsors and virtually no opposition. The House passed a similar bill on Tuesday, 415-3. You must demand that this bill comes to the Senate floor today, freestanding and without harmful riders.

It is unacceptable for the Senate to attach VAWA to or partner it with any bill that the President has threatened to veto. One such bill is the Bankruptcy Reform Act, a bill that threatens women's economic security by:

Making it more difficult to file bankruptcy and regain economic stability afterwards.

Pitting women and children who are trying to collect child support against powerful commercial companies trying to collect credit card and other debts.

Punishing honest low income bankruptcy filers while providing cover for individuals convicted of violating FACE (clinic violence protections).

We cannot support a bill that uses VAWA to provide cover for legislation that also hurts women. S. 2787 can be passed under Unanimous Consent today. Please just do it.

Sincerely,

PATRICIA BLAU REUSS,
Vice President, Government Relations.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LAW CENTER,
NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP FOR
WOMEN & FAMILIES,

September 17, 1999.

Re: S. 625, The "Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1999"

DEAR SENATOR: The undersigned women's and children's organizations write to urge you to oppose S. 625, the "Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1999."

Hundreds of thousands of women and their children are affected by the bankruptcy system each year as debtors and creditors. Indeed, women are the fastest growing group in bankruptcy. In 1999, over half a million women are expected to file for bankruptcy by themselves—more than men filing by themselves or married couples. About 200,000 of these women filers will be trying to collect child support or alimony. Another 200,000 women owed child support or alimony by men who file for bankruptcy will become bankruptcy creditors.

S. 625 puts both groups of economically vulnerable women and children at greater risk. By increasing the rights of many creditors, including credit card companies, finance companies, auto lenders and others, the bill would set up a competition for scarce resources between parents and children owed child support and commercial creditors both during and after bankruptcy. And single parents facing financial crises—often caused by divorce, nonpayment of support, loss of a job, uninsured medical expenses, or domestic violence—would find it harder to regain their economic stability through the bankruptcy process. The bill would make it harder for these parents to meet the filing requirements; harder, if they got there, to save their homes, cars, and essential household items; and harder to meet their children's needs after bankruptcy because many more debts would survive.

Contrary to the claims of some, the domestic support provisions included in the bill would not solve these problems. The provisions only relate to the collection of support during bankruptcy from a bankruptcy filer; they do nothing to alleviate the additional hardships the bill would create for the hundreds of thousands of women forced into bankruptcy themselves. And even for women who are owed support by men who file for bankruptcy, the provisions fail to ensure that support payments will come first, ahead of the increased claims of the commercial creditors. Some improvement were made in the domestic support provisions in the Judiciary Committee. However, even the revised provisions fail to solve the problems created by the rest of the bill, which gives many other creditors greater claims—both during and after bankruptcy—than they have under current law. The bill does not ensure that, in this intensified competition for the debtor's limited resources, parents and children owed support will prevail over the sophisticated collection departments of these powerful interests.

This Bankruptcy Reform Act will reduce the ability of parents to pay their most important debt—their debt to their children. It is for these reasons that we strongly oppose S. 625 and urge you to oppose it as well.

Very truly yours,

National Women's Law Center.
National Partnership for Women & Families.

ACES, Association for Children for Enforcement of Support, Inc.

American Association of University Women.

American Medical Women's Association.
Business and Professional Women/USA.

Center for Law and Social Policy.

Center for the Advancement of Public Policy.

Center for the Child Care Workforce.

Church Women United.

Coalition of Labor Union Women (CLUW).

Equal Rights Advocates.

Feminist Majority.

Hadassah.

International Women's Insolvency & Restructuring Confederation ("IWIRC").

National Association of Commissions for Women (NACW).

National Black Women's Health Project.

National Center for Youth Law.

National Council of Jewish Women.

National Council of Negro Women.

National Organization for Women.

National Women's Conference.

Northwest Women's Law Center.

NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund.

Wider Opportunities for Women.

The Women Activist Fund.

Women Employed.

Women Work!

Women's Institute for Freedom of Press.

Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc.

YWCA of the U.S.A.

disappearance of a leading member of the democratic opposition Viktor Gonchar and his associate, Anatoly Krasovsky. And just a few days ago, we were informed that Belarusian Popular Front leader Vintsuk Viachorka's request for air time on Belarusian television to explain why the opposition is boycotting the parliamentary elections was met with a hateful, disparaging diatribe on the main newscast "Panorama."

This is only the tip of the iceberg—in addition, the Helsinki Commission is receiving reports of detentions, fines and instances of beatings of opposition activists who are promoting a boycott of the elections by distributing leaflets or other literature or holding meetings with voters. In recent weeks, we have also been informed of the refusal to register many opposition candidates on dubious grounds; the seizure of over 100,000 copies of the independent trade union newspaper "Rabochy"; forceful disruptions of public meetings with representatives of the opposition; an apparent burglary of the headquarters of the Social Democratic Party; a ban of the First Festival of Independent Press in Vitebsk, and recent "reminder letters" by the State Committee on Press for independent newspapers to re-register.

Mr. President, Belarusian opposition parties supporting the boycott have received permission to stage "Freedom March III" this Sunday, October 1. At a number of past demonstrations, police have detained, harassed and beaten participants. Those in Congress who are following developments in Belarus are hopeful that this demonstration will take place peacefully, that authorities do not limit the rights of Belarusian citizens to freedom of association and assembly, and that the Government of Belarus will refrain from acts of repression against the opposition and others who openly advocate for a boycott of these elections.

Mr. President, the Helsinki Commission continue to monitor closely the events surrounding these elections and we will keep the full Senate apprized of developments in the ongoing struggle for democracy in Belarus.

CONTINUING CLIMATE OF FEAR IN BELARUS

Mr. CAMPBELL. Mr. President, as co-chairman of the Helsinki Commission, I take this opportunity to update my colleagues on the situation in Belarus, as I have done on previous occasions.

The Belarusian parliamentary elections are scheduled for October 15, and unfortunately, they do not meet the basic commitments outlined by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) concerning free and democratic elections. Moreover, many observers have concluded that the Belarusian government has not made real progress in fulfilling four criteria for international observation of the elections: respect for human rights and an end to the climate of fear; opposition access to the state media; a democratic electoral code; and the granting of real power to the parliament that will be chosen in these elections.

Instead, the Helsinki Commission has observed that the Lukashenka regime launched a campaign of intensified harassment in recent days directed against members of the opposition. We have received reports that just last week, Anatoly Lebedka, leader of the United Civic Party, whom many of my colleagues met when he visited the Senate last year, was roughed up by police after attending an observance marking the first anniversary of the

SCHOOL SHOOTINGS

Mr. LEVIN. Mr. President, it is not even one month into the school year and yet school is canceled for the week at Carter C. Woodson Middle School in New Orleans, Louisiana. On Tuesday afternoon, a 13-year-old boy, who had been expelled from school for fighting, allegedly slipped another 13-year-old a .38-caliber revolver. The expelled teen was seen passing the handgun through the school fence to the other 13-year-old, who allegedly used the gun to shoot a 15-year-old schoolmate. According to witnesses, the 15-year-old then managed to get the gun from his attacker and return gunfire.