

important. A great deal of funding and resources has been expended in Afghanistan, much of it on important and necessary programs. But with the withdrawal of international troops and a commensurate decrease of funds going into the country, there is a distinct possibility that Afghanistan could experience an economic depression which could have dramatic security implications. There is time now to address this problem by conducting a careful review of all U.S. assistance to the country. Those programs that are not sustainable should be phased out. While this may have painful short-term consequences, it will be better for the long-term viability of the Afghan economy.

The United States and the international community should consistently reemphasize that while there will be a transition in 2014, this does not mean the wholesale withdrawal and disengagement from Afghanistan. The Strategic Partnership Agreement has helped send this message. The United States will still have significant security concerns in the country and should maintain a strong counterterrorism capability. Work will still remain in providing support and assistance to the Afghan National Security Forces. The international community can also continue to play a key role in helping Afghan society to develop.

All of this falls squarely within our national security interests, and all parties in Afghanistan and in the region should hear this message.

Finally, I will end with a few comments about Pakistan. I continue to believe that Pakistan is too important to U.S. interests for us to sever ties or significantly diminish the relationship. We know we have had trouble in our relationship, but we know a couple of other things as well. Pakistan has lots of nuclear weapons. It is a hotbed of Islamic extremism. It also provides the best logistics routes for our supplies headed into and out of Afghanistan, and Pakistan will play an essential role in ensuring the transition to a peaceful Afghanistan.

Despite the seemingly insurmountable challenges and at times divergent strategic interests, we must continue to find a way forward and work together where our interests do overlap. Pakistan has made significant sacrifices in countering extremism within its borders, mostly against forces that represent a direct threat to the state itself. It has yet to go after the Haqqani network in a serious way. It continues to provide a haven for the Quetta Shura Taliban, which is the headquarters of those seeking to destabilize the Afghan State.

Pakistan has not taken adequate measures to confront the proliferation and trade in illicit bombmaking materials which have killed thousands of its own citizens and hundreds and hundreds of our U.S. troops across the border in Afghanistan. Taking all of this into account, there is a significant ele-

ment of Pakistani society that we cannot consider allies. This is why I strongly support the conditionality built into U.S. assistance to Pakistan, which requires that the Pakistani authorities make significant progress in countering terrorism and attacking IED networks. If they do not take steps to address these issues, this assistance will be significantly cut, and it should be.

For more than 2 years I have worked to address this critical problem of improvised explosive devices, which are responsible for the majority of deaths and injuries among our servicemembers in Afghanistan. The primary explosive ingredient in IEDs used in southern Afghanistan is calcium ammonium nitrate, CAN. It is also used as a fertilizer and is produced in factories in Pakistan. I have been adamant that the Pakistani Government must significantly increase its commitment to regulating the bomb components and preventing them from being smuggled across the border into Afghanistan.

In June 2010 I introduced S. Res. 570, which called for an increased effort by Pakistan to effectively monitor and regulate the manufacture, sale, transport, and use of ammonium nitrate fertilizer in order to prevent its entrance into Afghanistan. The resolution passed the Senate unanimously on June 28, 2010.

During our recent visit to Pakistan, I discussed this issue with several senior government officials, as did Senator BENNET, Senator WHITEHOUSE, and Senator BLUMENTHAL. The Pakistani leaders expressed an interest in countering the proliferation of bomb components and presented to us an action plan for interdicting these materials. However, the proof of their commitment has yet to be seen through the implementation of this plan.

In December of 2011, I introduced an amendment to the National Defense Authorization Act that would require the Secretary of Defense to certify that Pakistan is demonstrating a continuing commitment to and making significant efforts toward the implementation of a strategy to counter IEDs. This provision, unfortunately, was removed during the conference committee. The final version of the bill requires the Secretary of Defense to produce a report on Pakistan's efforts to counter IEDs.

I continue to believe combating the threat posed by IEDs is one area where our interests do in fact overlap with Pakistan. At this time of frayed relations, IEDs continue to kill Pakistanis, Afghans, and, of course, Americans on the battlefield. By working together against this common threat, we can begin to rebuild confidence in the relationship and make progress toward more vexing strategic issues that affect our countries.

In September of 2010, I gave a speech on Afghanistan and Pakistan at the Army War College in Carlisle, PA. Former Secretary of War Elihu Root

believed that the Army War College was established in 1903, "not to promote war, but to preserve peace by intelligent and adequate preparation to repel aggression."

That is what Secretary Root said all those years ago. As we look forward to 2014 and a long-term relationship with the people of Afghanistan, all of our support for representative political institutions, improving the security environment, and Afghan social and economic development are intelligent and adequate preparation to repel aggression.

The next year and a half will be very consequential. If the United States works to strengthen representative institutions, bolsters the Afghan security forces, and maintains sustainable development assistance, all will pay dividends for our peace and security for years to come.

I yield the floor, and I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. CASEY. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN REAUTHORIZATION ACT of 2012

Mr. LEAHY. Mr. President, last month, the Senate came together and passed the Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2012. Our legislation takes some much needed steps to help the most vulnerable victims of domestic and sexual violence, and it was passed with significant bipartisan support. The Leahy-Crapo Violence Against Women Act was an example of what we accomplish when we put politics aside and work to find real solutions to real problems facing real Americans.

Few laws have had a greater impact on the lives of women in this country than the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). By shining a light on the insidious crimes of domestic and sexual violence, this law's initial passage nearly 20 years ago sent a powerful message that violence against women would no longer be tolerated. The days of dismissing these crimes with a joke or a shrug were over. The resources, training and law enforcement tools provided by VAWA transformed the criminal justice and community-based response to abuse. It gave support and protection to the victims who for generations had been blamed, humiliated and ignored.

With each reauthorization of this landmark law, Congress has repeatedly shown its bipartisan commitment to ending domestic and sexual violence by building on the protections in the initial legislation and expanding the reach of VAWA to meet the remaining unmet needs of victims.

The bill that I introduced with Senator CRAPO, and which passed the Senate with an overwhelming bipartisan majority just last month, is based on the successful tradition of preserving and enhancing protections. It is based on months of work with survivors, advocates, and law enforcement officers from all across the country and from across the political spectrum. We purposely avoided proposals that were extreme or divisive and selected only those proposals that law enforcement and survivors and the professionals who work with crime victims every day told us were essential. That is why the provisions in the Senate bill have such widespread support. More than 1,000 Federal, state, and local organizations have endorsed it, including service providers, law enforcement, religious organizations and many, many more.

The inclusive, open process of drafting this legislation is also why the Senate bill always had strong bipartisan support. It was a bipartisan effort from the beginning with eight Republican Senators cosponsoring the bill and seven more joining Democratic and Independent Senators in voting to pass the bill. We were able to move able to move to the bill without a filibuster, to consider amendments, which were rejected, and to pass the bill with almost 70 votes. We adopted a bill of which the Senate can be proud, because it serves the interests of the American people while improving support and protection for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

I am alarmed the other body—the House—has chosen a different path. Instead of building on the broad bipartisan support for the Senate-passed Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, Republican members of the House Judiciary Committee last week took up a bill, H.R.4970, that they crafted in back rooms without the input of those who dedicate their lives to helping victims. This afternoon the House Republican leadership brought that same bill to the floor, with only minor modifications that do little to respond to the urgent concerns of victims, and is forcing an up or down vote while blocking any attempts to modify the legislation in response to the concerns raised by victims and service providers around the country. Their legislation not only fails to include the critical improvements in the Senate bill that would increase protections for Native-American women, gay and lesbian victims, battered immigrant women, and victims on college campuses or victims in subsidized housing, it actually rolls back existing protections leaving many victims more vulnerable to sexual and domestic abuse. Among the most trou-

bling provisions are those that drastically undercut important, long-standing protections that are vital to the safety and protection of battered immigrant victims.

As a result of this misguided effort, the House bill is strongly opposed by many of the leading organizations that know these issues best, including the National Network to End Domestic Violence, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, the American Bar Association, the YWCA, the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and many, many more.

The thousands of local advocates and service providers around the country that make up the National Network to End Domestic Violence warned in a letter to the House Judiciary Committee that H.R. 4970 would (weaken, rather than enhance, protections for victims of domestic violence. (Sue Else, the President of that organization, lamented:

This is an unprecedented departure from this effective law's original intent. Thousands of victim advocates across the country recommended substantial improvements for the latest reauthorization, and the U.S. Senate accepted those recommendations in a bipartisan way. It is alarming that the House Judiciary Committee has not done the same.

The American Bar Association has stated:

Unlike the recently passed Senate bill (S. 1925), which reflects discussions with more than 2,000 advocates and experts across the country, H.R. 4970 represents a retreat from the fight against domestic and sexual violence. It fails to add critical improvements to address the needs of underserved populations, like victims who are members of faith communities and those who are denied services because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and strips critical protections from existing law.

The YWCA, the largest provider of services for battered women in the country, calls the House bill a “dangerous bill that puts the lives of millions of women across the nation at risk.” These organizations represent those on the front lines against domestic and sexual violence. They are motivated by their desire to see all victims get the help they need.

Likewise, a number of faith-based organizations, such as the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the National Association of Evangelicals, and nearly 20 other religious institutions have joined a letter stating that they are “deeply troubled” by the “many provisions [in the House bill] that actually would roll back protections in current law for battered non-citizens, making them more vulnerable and, in some cases, endangering their lives.”

House Republicans are headed down the wrong path. In fact, when the Senate rejected their alternative to our bipartisan bill last month by a strong bipartisan vote of only 37 in favor and 62 opposed, I had hoped that would end the partisanship and the gamesmanship and we would be able to move forward together to reauthorize the Violence

Against Women Act. I was encouraged to see the lead sponsor of the Republican alternative, the distinguished senior Senator from Texas, do just that and join with us to support the bipartisan Senate bill upon final passage. I commended Senator HUTCHISON for doing so. Likewise, we were buoyed by the support on final passage by the Senior Senator from Arizona, the Senators from Tennessee, Senator COATES of Indiana, Senator HOEVEN of North Dakota, Senator PORTMAN of Ohio and Senator VITTER of Louisiana.

Despite all this, House Republicans seem determined to destroy this bipartisan effort. As evidenced by the vote they are forcing today, they are intent on proceeding with their bill to roll back victim protections and insistent that it be done without the opportunity to consider the better, Senate-passed bill or, for that matter, any other amendments to their ill-conceived effort to undercut the Violence Against Women Act.

The House Republican bill not only fails to protect more victims, but actually weakens existing protections. I fear that it puts more lives at risk.

In its Statement of Administration Policy, the Obama administration correctly opposes the House bill, H.R. 4970, as a measure that “would undermine the core principles of the Violence Against Women Act.” It notes the House Republican bill “retreats” from the progress represented by the protections included in the bipartisan Senate-passed bill and “weakens” critical protections for victims. The House provisions “senselessly remove existing legal protections, undermine VAWA’s core purpose of protecting victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, frustrate important law enforcement objectives, and jeopardize victims by placing them directly in harm’s way.” It concludes with a threatened veto recommendation since the House measure “rolls back existing law and removes long-standing protections for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.” Never before, in either Republican or Democratic administrations, Republican- or Democrat-controlled Houses or Senates, has the Violence Against Women Act been used to increase the dangers to women and so consciously disregard the unmet needs of our most vulnerable victims. Never before.

Last week the White House Advisor on Violence Against Women noted that the House Republican bill “adds burdensome, counter-productive requirements that compromise the ability of service providers to reach victims, fails to adequately protect Tribal victims, lacks important protection and services for LGBT victims, weakens resources for victims living in subsidized housing, and eliminates important improvements to address dating violence and sexual assault on college campuses.” She is right.

The closed process by which the House Republican leadership insisted

its ill-conceived bill be rubberstamped breaks House Republican promises to allow amendments and proceed by an open amendment process. The House Republican bill's roll back of protections breaks the promise of the Violence Against Women Act to protect victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. Never before has the Violence Against Women Act been used to increase the dangers to women and so consciously disregarded the unmet needs of our most vulnerable victims.

A recent New York Times editorial entitled "Backwards on Domestic Violence" had it right: "House members on both sides of the aisle who are serious about combating domestic violence must work to defeat this atrocious bill." That sentiment was reinforced by a recent Los Angeles Times editorial which stated: "Republicans in the House should drop their attempts to undermine the Violence Against Women Act and instead move swiftly to reauthorize and strengthen the existing program, as the Senate has already done."

Today The Washington Post reports on another study by Human Rights Watch documenting sexual violence and harassment of female farmworkers. Congress should not be turning its backs to these battered and abused women. We should be moving forward promptly to adopt the provisions of the Senate-passed bill to protect the most vulnerable among us, women who are doubly victimized by abusers and by the fear that they have no recourse.

I thank Senators MURRAY, MENENDEZ and SHAHEEN for their strong statements in support of the Senate-passed Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act yesterday. I am disheartened by the decision of the House Republican leadership to try to push through their destructive bill over the clear objections of those very victims it is supposed to serve. I urge the supporters of the bipartisan Senate bill to continue our efforts to see that this carefully crafted legislation that meets the needs of so many people is finally passed into law.

I ask unanimous consent to have printed in the RECORD the Statement of Administrative Policy, the editorials from the New York Times and the Los Angeles Times, and the letters to which I have referred.

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

STATEMENT OF ADMINISTRATION POLICY
H.R. 4970—VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN
REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2012

(Rep. Adams, R-FL, and 40 cosponsors, May 15, 2012)

The Administration strongly opposes H.R. 4970, a bill that would undermine the core principles of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). VAWA is a landmark piece of legislation that first passed the Congress in 1994 and has twice been reauthorized with overwhelming bipartisan support, each time with important improvements to strengthen VAWA. The Act transformed the Nation's response to violence against women and

brought critically needed resources to States and local communities to address these crimes.

H.R. 4970 retreats from this forward progress by failing to include several critical provisions that are part of the Senate-passed VAWA reauthorization bill. For instance, H.R. 4970 fails to provide for concurrent special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction by tribal authorities over non-Indians, and omits clarification of tribal courts' full civil jurisdiction regarding certain protection orders over non-Indians. Given that three out of five Native American women experience domestic violence in their lifetime, these omissions in H.R. 4970 are unacceptable. The bill also fails to include language that would prohibit discrimination against LGBT victims in VAWA grant programs. No sexual assault or domestic violence victim should be beaten, hurt, or killed because they could not access needed support, assistance, and protection. In addition, H.R. 4970 does not include important improvements to the Clery Act found in the Senate-passed bill that would address the high rates of dating violence and sexual assault experienced by young people in college and other higher education institutions. The bill also weakens critical new provisions in the Senate-passed bill that would improve safety for victims living in subsidized housing.

H.R. 4970 also takes direct aim at immigrant victims of domestic violence and sexual assault by removing critical protections currently in law. H.R. 4970 allows abusers to be notified when a victim files a VAWA self-petition for relief, and it eliminates the path to citizenship for U visa holders—victims of serious crimes such as torture, rape, and domestic violence—who are cooperating with law enforcement in the investigation or prosecution of these crimes. These proposals senselessly remove existing legal protections, undermine VAWA's core purpose of protecting victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, frustrate important law enforcement objectives, and jeopardize victims by placing them directly in harm's way.

The Administration urges the House to find common ground with the bipartisan Senate-passed bill and consider and pass legislation that will protect all victims. H.R. 4970 rolls back existing law and removes long-standing protections for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault—crimes that predominately affect women. If the President is presented with H.R. 4970, his senior advisors would recommend that he veto the bill.

NATIONAL NETWORK TO END
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,
Washington, DC, May 7, 2012.

HON. LAMAR SMITH,
House Judiciary Committee, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

HON. JOHN CONYERS,
Ranking Member, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH AND RANKING MEMBER CONYERS: The National Network to End Domestic Violence, which represents all of our nation's state and territorial domestic violence and dual domestic violence-sexual assault coalitions, their 2,000 member programs and the millions of victims they serve every year, opposes HR 4970, a bill introduced by Representatives Sandy Adams (R-FL) and Eric Cantor (R-VA) to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA).

VAWA was initially passed in 1994 and subsequently reauthorized in 2000 and 2005 to meet the needs of victims. HR 4970 fails to meet, and in fact, weakens, rather than enhances, protections for victims of domestic violence. The network of survivors and advocates who work on a daily basis with courts,

law enforcement, prosecutors, shelters, academic and medical institutions need VAWA's tools—its laws and programs—to help keep victims safe. All of us are alarmed that HR 4970 takes the wrong direction and will be dangerous for victims.

We are particularly concerned with provisions that erode critical safety measures for immigrant victims seeking safety and justice, fail to fix a jurisdictional issue for victims on tribal lands who are beaten by non-tribal perpetrators with near impunity, and turn a blind eye to lesbian, gay and other marginalized communities. If enacted, this bill would jeopardize victims' lives and embolden perpetrators of violence. HR 4970 also wrongly grows bureaucracy through the costly and excessive auditing of small non-profits. Resources would be better spent training and supporting those important organizations that provide these lifesaving services and advocacy. And finally, the emergency housing transfer section in this bill, which is intended to help victims flee violent, dangerous perpetrators without becoming homeless, is weakened by allowing the adoption of transfer policies to be "voluntary" by owners, managers and public housing agencies.

The U.S. House of Representatives has the opportunity to develop and pass a bipartisan VAWA that meets the needs of victims. HR 4970 is not such a bill. We look forward to working with the House Judiciary Committee and all Members of Congress to develop a bill that is reflective of the needs of all victims. Please contact Paulette Sullivan Moore, NNEDV's Vice President of Policy, at psmoore@nnedv.org with any questions.

Sincerely,

SUE ELSE,
President.

MAY 7, 2012.

HON. LAMAR SMITH,
Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

HON. JOHN CONYERS,
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary, House of Representatives, Washington, DC.

DEAR CHAIRMAN SMITH AND RANKING MEMBER CONYERS: On behalf of the undersigned faith leaders and faith-based organizations concerned about victims of domestic violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, and other forms of violence, we write to express our concerns about Title VIII of H.R. 4970, legislation to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), which we understand the House Committee on the Judiciary plans to mark up tomorrow.

Faith communities are on the front lines, identifying victims, providing refuge, referring victims and their families for services, and offering hope and healing. In times of crisis, victims often turn to faith communities and leaders for support and moral guidance because they see places of worship as a sanctuary from the horrors they have experienced. Through our ministry with victims, we have learned that abusers often exploit a victim's immigration status, leaving individuals extremely vulnerable and afraid to report the abuse to law enforcement, assist in the prosecution of crimes, and seek services.

Congress created VAWA in 1994, and it has voted twice since then to reauthorize the law, each time with broad bipartisan support. However, we are deeply troubled by Title VIII of H.R. 4970, as introduced. Title VIII contains many provisions that actually would roll back protections in current law for battered non-citizens, making them more vulnerable and, in some cases, endangering their lives. We urge you to strike these provisions from the bill before the measure is brought before the full House of Representatives for a vote.

VAWA is an effective tool in combatting the devastating crimes of domestic violence and providing lifesaving programs and services. We urge Congress to preserve and improve protections for vulnerable immigrant victims.

Sincerely,

Noel Castellanos, CEO, Christian Community Development Association; Rev. John L. McCullough, Executive Director and CEO, Church World Service; Wendy Tarr, Director, Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice; Alex Baumgarten, Director of Government Relations, The Episcopal Church; Luis Cortes, President, Esperanza; Alexia Salvatierra, Director of Justice Ministries, Southwest California Synod Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Patrick Carolan, Executive Director, Franciscan Action Network; Gideon Aronoff, President and CEO, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society; Orlando Crespo, National Director, La Fe Multi-Ethnic Ministries, Intersarsity Christian Fellowship/USA; Janet Mock, CSJ, Executive Director, Leadership Conference of Women Religious.

Linda Hartke, President and CEO, Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service; Rachelle Lyndaker Schlabach, Director, Mennonite Central Committee, U.S. Washington Office; Salam Al-Marayati, President, Muslim Public Affairs Council; Leith Anderson, President, National Association of Evangelicals; Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, President, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference; Rev. Gabriel Salguero, President, National Latino Evangelical Coalition; Jim Wallis, President and CEO, Sojourners; Johnny Young, Executive Director, Migration and Refugee Services, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops; Lynne Hybels, Willow Creek Community Church; Deborah Fikes, Executive Advisor, World Evangelical Alliance; Stephan Bauman, President and CEO, World Relief.

AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION,
Washington, DC, May 7, 2012.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY,
U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: On behalf of the American Bar Association, with nearly 400,000 members, I write to express our opposition to H.R. 4970, the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization bill introduced by Rep. Sandy Adams (R-FL), which is scheduled to be considered by the House Judiciary Committee on May 8, 2012. We urge members of the committee to oppose the bill.

VAWA has been the single most effective federal effort to respond to the epidemic of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking in this country. The act has ensured that legal and social services are available to survivors, and that law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, attorneys and advocates are well-trained and equipped with cutting-edge resources to effectively address these crimes in their own communities.

Reauthorization of VAWA is critical, providing Congress with the opportunity to amend the act in order to combat domestic and sexual violence more effectively. For example, in 2000, Congress created the Legal Assistance to Victims grant program. It also created the U visa for immigrants who are victims of serious crimes and who have cooperated with authorities in the prosecution of the perpetrator, and it authorized funding for increased protection of older individuals and individuals with disabilities. And in 2005, it became unlawful to deny an individual housing assistance simply because the individual is a victim of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault or stalking. Congress also created a new grant program to improve court responses to these crimes.

H.R. 4970 does not continue this tradition of improvement. Unlike the recently passed Senate bill (S. 1925), which reflects discussions with more than 2,000 advocates and experts across the country, H.R. 4970 represents a retreat from the fight against domestic and sexual violence. It fails to add critical improvements to address the needs of underserved populations, like victims who are members of faith communities and those who are denied services because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, and strips critical protections from existing law.

The provisions of H.R. 4970 that significantly undermine protections available to vulnerable immigrant victims of violence are of particular concern. Before enactment of VAWA, abusive U.S. Citizens and Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) were able to use the immigration laws as a mechanism to further abuse and control their immigrant spouses and children. Perpetrators of domestic violence routinely would thwart, or threaten to thwart, the visa petitioning process. In creating a special application process for battered spouses and children of U.S. Citizens and LPRs, lawmakers recognized that many victims of domestic abuse were unwittingly victimized by the immigration system as well.

The current VAWA green card application process involves a "self-petition," so that the abuser is not involved at all in the process and prohibits the government from releasing information about the existence of a VAWA immigration case to the abuser or others. H.R. 4970 removes those critical protections. A forced choice between deportation or safety from an abusive spouse or trafficker is the precise evil that the original self-petitioning provisions of the VAWA were intended to eliminate. H.R. 4970 creates obstacles for immigrant victims seeking to report crimes and increases the danger to victims by eliminating important confidentiality provisions.

Because it fails to improve upon our nation's response to domestic violence and sexual assault by ensuring that all populations are protected and in fact rolls back critical protections in existing law, the ABA urges you to oppose H.R. 4970. VAWA is a critical tool in the arsenal to address domestic and sexual violence, and it must be improved during this reauthorization process to address the needs of all victims and hold more offenders accountable.

Sincerely,

THOMAS M. SUSMAN,
Director, Governmental Affairs Office.

MAY 7, 2012.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE: As the largest provider of battered women's services in the United States, with over 1300 locations in 47 states, the YWCA is deeply invested in the safety and health of all women. The YWCA serves over half a million women each year through its anti-violence programs, providing much needed access for victims of violence to 24-hour crisis hotlines, emergency shelter, counseling services, legal assistance, child care, economic empowerment programs and transitional housing. The YWCA strongly opposes any legislation that puts victims' lives at risk, and as such, opposes H.R. 4970 to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) introduced by Rep. Sandy Adams (R-FL).

For nearly 18 years, VAWA has provided a national, streamlined response to address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking. H.R. 4970 cuts back on critical provisions outlined in S. 1925, passed last month, that protect some of the most vulnerable women in our communities, and as a result, is a dangerous bill that puts the lives of millions of women across the nation at risk.

Under H.R. 4970, immigrant women will be required to conduct interviews for U-visa petitions in person, which does not take into consideration the unfortunate reality of many victims of violence where their movement is strictly limited or closely monitored by their abusers. In addition, H.R. 4970 would eliminate key confidentially measures by allowing USCIS officers to notify and interview the abusers. Not only will this keep immigrant victims from reporting abuse, but it will put their lives at risk if they do proceed to apply for a U-visa. Studies indicate that the two most heightened periods of danger for victims of abuse are when they are pregnant and when they decide to leave an abusive situation—disregarding the importance of confidentiality and informing the abuser of the victims' intent to leave will undoubtedly lead to greater danger for the very people that this bill purports to assist.

H.R. 4970 disregards the epidemic rates of violence in Indian Country by allowing batterers to avoid prosecution on Tribal lands. By doing so, the bill fails to hold perpetrators of violence accountable for their actions and sends a clear message to Native victims of violence to remain silent and endure abuse. Without explicitly addressing the issue of accountability, Native victims will continue to remain fearful of reporting crimes of abuse. H.R. 4970 also strips all support for LGBT victims of abuse, claiming that they are not the "right" victims. The YWCA supports all women and victims of abuse regardless of sexual orientation, immigration status, or race, and does not stand for isolating entire subsets of the community that face unique barriers to accessing services. By excluding the LGBT community in the bill, H.R. 4970 it prevents providers from serving ALL women, and no one should be denied help based on their sexual orientation.

H.R. 4970 fails to provide inclusive provisions that address the unique needs of underserved communities, which would in turn endanger the lives of millions of women across the nation. The YWCA supports legislation that is trauma informed, victim centered, and evidence based, and is opposed to any provisions that force victims to negotiate their safety when seeking assistance from abusive situations.

In short, we urge you to oppose H.R. 4970. Please contact Desiree Hoffman, Director of Advocacy and Policy at dhoffman@ywca.org or Qudsia Jafree, Field and Policy Coordinator at qjafree@ywca.org should you have questions.

Sincerely,

DESIREE HOFFMAN,
YWCA USA, Director of Advocacy and Policy.

[From the New York Times]

BACKWARD ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In an all-too-rare show of bipartisanship, 15 Senate Republicans joined with the Democratic majority last month to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, the landmark 1994 law that is key to efforts against domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Unfortunately, the lopsided 68-to-31 Senate vote halted G.O.P. opponents only temporarily. The House Judiciary Committee last week approved its version of the reauthorization bill, which not only omits improvements the Senate bill made to the law but also removes existing protections for immigrant women, putting them at greater risk of domestic and sexual abuse.

The Senate's measure ensures that victims are not denied services because they are gay or transgender. It also strives to ensure that domestic violence crimes committed by non-Indian men in tribal communities are prosecuted. The Senate bill also would modestly

expand the availability of special U-visas for undocumented immigrants who are victims of domestic violence. That move was supported by law enforcement to encourage victims to come forward and testify against their abusers.

The regressive House alternative removes these and other improvements, including new protections for students on college campuses. The House measure would eliminate a confidentiality requirement in current law that protects the identity of immigrant women who file domestic violence complaints against a spouse who is a citizen or legal resident and allows the women to apply for legal status on their own.

House Republicans claim there is a big fraud problem in this area, but there is no hard evidence of that. And their plan to end the centralized handling of these issues by a Vermont-based office would undermine the government's ability to detect untruthful stories.

House members on both sides of the aisle who are serious about combating domestic violence must work to defeat this atrocious bill. If that fails, the Senate will need to insist on fixing it during the reconciliation process.

[From latimes.com, May 15, 2012]

PARTISANSHIP AND THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT

The House needs to reauthorize the law, without limits, as it has in the past, so Republicans can demonstrate that helping battered women is more important than political games.

The political climate in Congress is so noxious these days that even a law that originally passed with overwhelming bipartisan support because it provided much-needed help to abused women is now a partisan issue. That's shameful. Republicans in the House should drop their attempts to undermine the Violence Against Women Act and instead move swiftly to reauthorize and strengthen the existing program, as the Senate has already done.

First enacted in 1994, the law has been renewed twice without a fight. Last week, however, some of the same GOP lawmakers who once endorsed the law retreated, voting in committee to strip out provisions designed to protect immigrants. Under VAWA as it has long existed, if an immigrant married to a U.S. citizen or a green-card holder—and therefore eligible to stay in the country permanently—can show evidence of abuse, he or she may file independently without having to rely on the abusive spouse. VAWA's gender-neutral protections apply to legal and illegal immigrants and allow the victim to file confidentially.

Confidentiality is crucial. As the Republican-led House Judiciary Committee noted in its 2005 report to reauthorize VAWA and expand protections, without such guarantees, an abuser could try to derail a spouse's green-card application or push to have him or her deported. A battered woman whose application depends on her abusive husband certainly might think twice about filing if she knew her abuser would be notified that she was seeking help without him.

Eliminating the confidentiality provision is one of several changes House Republicans would like to make to weaken the law. They argue that the changes are necessary to combat fraud, in which immigrants falsely claim to have been abused in order to obtain visas. But where are the data and studies that fraud is a problem? Immigrant victims who petition for visas under VAWA are already required to supply ample evidence of abuse, such as police reports or medical records. And applications undergo intense scrutiny.

In fiscal 2011, immigration officials denied nearly a third of those petitions.

The House reauthorization bill also seeks to undercut a provision that allows undocumented immigrants who assist in prosecutions of serious crime for U visas, and ultimately obtain green cards. The proposed changes would allow victims to obtain temporary visas only. Surely, even those lawmakers who embrace anti-immigrant legislation can appreciate that U visas help protect American citizens too, by encouraging witnesses to step forward without fear of deportation. That's why the program enjoys the backing of many law enforcement groups.

The House will vote on Wednesday. It should reauthorize VAWA without limits, as it has in the past, and demonstrate that helping battered women, those who are immigrants, isn't a partisan issue.

THE FARM BILL

Mr. BENNET. Mr. President, I rise to highlight for my colleagues how Congress now has a critical opportunity to support the competitiveness and prosperity of American agriculture. We need to move the farm bill forward. It is fitting that this week marks the 150th anniversary of the founding of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Federal Department solely dedicated to meeting the needs of America's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities.

Agriculture is at the heart of Colorado's history and cultural fabric. It also continues to be one of our most significant economic drivers. At a time when many sectors are struggling to find growth, Colorado farmers and ranchers are more productive than ever, finding innovative ways to harness growing consumer demand for agricultural products both at home and in overseas markets.

As evidence of this success, agriculture is the one sector of the U.S. economy that boasts a trade surplus. During the first 2 months of 2012, Colorado exports of agricultural products grew by 25 percent over the same period in 2011, led by an 80-percent increase in dairy exports. This good news comes on the heels of several consecutive years of double-digit increases in Colorado agriculture exports.

The USDA is part of this success story. Colorado farmers and ranchers work closely with local USDA employees to support the productivity of their operations and to maintain the health of their land and water resources. It is a vital partnership. And with expiration looming on many programs important to Colorado agriculture, I can think of no better way to commemorate the USDA's 150th anniversary than by reauthorizing the farm bill.

Over the last several months, the Senate and House committees on agriculture have come together to craft a bipartisan farm bill that not only provides America's farmers, ranchers, and rural communities with the tools they need to keep growing but also makes a significant contribution toward important national deficit reduction goals. The farm bill passed by the Senate Ag-

riculture Committee makes very significant progress in simplification, accountability, and taxpayer savings.

Using feedback I received from over 20 listening sessions statewide, I worked to secure Colorado's top farm bill priorities. In particular, I am encouraged by the farm bill's revamped conservation title. It maintains vital authorities for land and water protection while also consolidating over 20 existing conservation programs to provide producers and landowners with much needed flexibility.

I also strongly support efforts by the Senate Agriculture Committee to strengthen the Federal crop insurance program. Time and time again, Colorado farmers have told me that affordable crop insurance is the single most important risk management tool the USDA can provide to producers for addressing today's economic and ecological challenges.

According to Colorado State University, agriculture contributes \$40 billion toward the State economy annually. Of course, the benefits of a strong farm economy extend far beyond the farm. It means stronger energy, transportation, and retail sectors. It also allows us to provide food assistance to the most vulnerable populations at home and in countries suffering from famine due to drought and conflict.

In short, reauthorizing the farm bill is one the most important things this Congress can do to provide farmers and ranchers with the certainty they need to plan for the future. It will help to keep rural America growing and thriving, and it will help to invigorate an economy just now getting back on its feet. Acting on this legislation during USDA's 150th year would make the accomplishment even better.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO FATHER RICHARD J. KELLEY

• Ms. AYOTTE. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize and honor my friend, Father Richard J. Kelley, a Catholic priest who has devoted decades of service in parishes across New Hampshire. It is my privilege to congratulate him as he celebrates his 40th anniversary of ordination to priesthood.

Father Kelley was born in Boston, MA, on May 10, 1943. He was raised in Needham and West Roxbury and graduated from Catholic Memorial High School in 1961. His seminary studies took place at the Holy Apostles Seminary in Cromwell, CT, and Catholic University in Washington, DC.

In addition to his commitment to the Catholic Church, Father Kelley has always reached out to help those in need. Before his ordination to priesthood, he spent time performing inner-city social work in Kansas City, MO. Shortly thereafter, Father Kelley was ordained to priesthood on May 20, 1972, at the St. Joseph Cathedral in Manchester, NH.