

HOUSE SELECT AND SPECIAL COMMITTEES  
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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS  
MONTH

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. AL GREEN) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, ending domestic violence is not a quixotic quest; it is a noble calling. This is why we have filed H. Res. 392, a resolution supporting the goals and ideals of October as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month, expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that Congress should continue to raise awareness of domestic violence and its devastating effects on individuals, families, and communities, and support programs designed to end domestic violence in the United States.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to tell you that we will have a number of speakers.

At this time, I yield to the Congresswoman from the Fourth District of Maryland, the Honorable DONNA EDWARDS. She serves on Science, Space, and Technology; Transportation and Infrastructure; she cochaurs the Women's Caucus; and she is the chair of the Democratic Women's Working Group. She also cofounded the National Network to End Domestic Violence in 1994. She was its executive director.

Ms. EDWARDS. I thank the gentleman. I know that you join with your colleague, Mr. POE of Texas, in hosting this hour so that we can have an opportunity to remember why it is that we identify and commemorate Domestic Violence Awareness Month, and to make a commitment from this day forward, and from this coming year to the next time we have this observance, to do what we can to end domestic violence. I think, after all, that is the goal.

I can't remember, Mr. GREEN, when I first became interested in domestic violence, or even aware of domestic violence, but I look back to the times when I was growing up. I grew up in a military family. We lived in very close quarters. We shared a wall in that military family housing with our neighbor. In our neighbor's house, there was clearly something going on. My sister and I shared a bedroom, and we could hear what was going on, and it was violent. It was clearly violent.

I don't know that I understood that at the time, Mr. Speaker, but I have come to understand it as an adult. It frames my commitment, lifelong commitment, to ending domestic violence.

I remember at that time the military police being called. They would come and they would drive the gentleman around the block, and then he would be delivered right back home. Then a few nights later, the exact same thing would happen again.

I remember my sister and I seeing the woman who lived next door, and we were friends with their children, and I remember seeing her. I was always intrigued by her dark glasses and her great makeup and the scarves that she wore around her neck. It wasn't until later that I understood that she was covering her black eye, she was covering the bruises on her neck, she was covering the bruises on her face from having been a victim of domestic violence. It was many, many years, in fact, as an adult where I came to really process and understand what was going on.

I think because domestic violence affects so many around the country, and most particularly it affects women, that there is almost a chance that in any given family or at a family reunion or family gathering, if you probe just enough, you will find someone who has experienced domestic violence.

Very sadly, you will also find many young children who have witnessed domestic violence. I think that we have only to look at the children who are growing up in homes where mostly their mothers are being abused, and then we wonder why it is that when we look at the population of young people who are incarcerated, and when you ask them one by one—and I have done this, I have visited incarcerated youth—almost to a one they will tell you that either they have been the victims of violence or they grew up in a violent home.

I think, Mr. Speaker, it must resonate with us that we have to ask ourselves why it is that we continue to have violence, and what it is that we can do to get to the root cause of that violence.

So in addition, during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, to identify the fact that we lose about \$8 billion a year in productivity that is lost because of domestic violence—lost time off of work, medical expenses, and the rest—we know that it is a social ill that is very pervasive.

We also know that there are other kinds of crimes that are associated with domestic violence—stalking is one of those, sexual assault within a relationship.

Mr. Speaker, we also are aware that our young women, ages 16 to 24, are more likely than not to experience some form of violence in those relationships.

So earlier this year—and it took us some time to get there, Mr. Speaker—we did finally reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. The Violence Against Women Act, which was first authorized in 1994—I was a part of that, helped to lead that effort on the outside, where our leaders in Congress

were leading on the inside, leaders like our now Vice-President JOE BIDEN, who was in the Senate and who took this bull by the horns and led us to the passage of the first Violence Against Women Act that was signed into law by President Clinton.

It was the first time ever that the Federal Government came forward and said, we have a real commitment to ending domestic violence by providing resources for shelters and services, training law enforcement, making sure that our judges were equipped to handle these cases in court, providing advocacy services for those who are experiencing violence, and going through the system.

Over each successive couple of years, we have reauthorized the Violence Against Women Act. We did that just recently. As I have said, in these tough economic times, it has been very difficult. All of a sudden, domestic violence became partisan and political.

I am glad to say, Mr. Speaker, that we did finally reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act again. We are providing those resources to those who experience violence.

But it should also come as no surprise that as we engage in the fiscal debates that we have here in the Congress, that because of sequester and shutting down the government even, that many of those shelters and services and programs are, in fact, experiencing a really difficult time at the same time that they are experiencing more demand.

I don't say that, Mr. Speaker, to call out one side or the other, but I am glad we are back at a point where in this Domestic Violence Awareness Month, we take the politics out of domestic violence, and we say to women, whether you are Republicans, Democrats, or Independents, or you don't think about politics at all, that we care about ending domestic violence, we care about the fact, Mr. Speaker, that more women are placed in a much more dangerous circumstance when there is a weapon in the home and that weapon is used to either kill or harm or threaten the lives of those who are in the home. That is something that we can do something about.

Mr. Speaker, let me just say, this last year, we lost a really powerful advocate for those who experience domestic violence. When Senator Frank Lautenberg of New Jersey died earlier this year, we remembered him in a lot of ways as a leader, Mr. Speaker, but on this Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I would like the Nation to remember Senator Lautenberg because he was the one who spearheaded the domestic violence firearm prevention that said that if you are committing domestic violence and you have a domestic violence offense, that you cannot purchase or possess a weapon. The Federal Government and the Congress recognized the importance of removing a weapon from a home where there is domestic violence. Senator Lautenberg was the champion.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to close—I know that we have other speakers—and just say that this Member of Congress, and I know that our colleagues here today, remain committed to ending domestic violence, to making sure that women can achieve their fullest potential by living in a home that is free of violence.

□ 1545

And, in fact, as we look around the world, whether it is in Afghanistan or Iraq or it is in South or Central America or in Africa, in many nations women experience violence in relationships in their homes. But, Mr. Speaker, if we can end that violence in the home, then we would do a lot to make certain that children are growing up healthy and able to have healthy relationships and that women are able to achieve their fullest potential.

So I join you today in calling attention to Domestic Violence Awareness Month and to redoubling our commitment to end domestic violence. I say a special thank you and salute to an organization that I started—now I don't know—15 to 20 years ago, the National Network to End Domestic Violence, and all of the networks of advocates around the country who are committed to the same things that we are. And if only we can provide the resources that they need to do their work, I am convinced that we can end this scourge.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I thank you very much for your testimony. Actually, it is something that I believe will benefit a good many persons who are viewing this today.

I would like to share just a few stories, if I may. Mr. Speaker, I practiced law in Houston, Texas, and my practice was one that involved a good deal of civil work. In the early 1970s, I can recall females coming to my office to receive assistance from a lawyer to file charges based upon abuse that had been imposed upon them.

In some of the cases, the damage done to the person was physical and immediately seen; but as you talked to the person, you could see that this person had been suffering for years. Literally years of suffering would emerge from this person in a 30-minute, 1 hour, 1½ hour visit. And they would plead with me, Please help me get the charges filed. The plea was there because at that time it was considered a family issue. When women would go in to file charges, the police would say, Well, we will look at it. We will see if we can get somebody out there. But they didn't always respond to the evident need. The need was evident because of what the eye could see.

Many of the women who would come in would bring a minister or some other person to corroborate the story. There was this belief that your physical appearance alone was not enough evidence to support the filing of charges.

Unfortunately, society had so developed at that time that we would take

this victim to intake and we would help with the filing of the charges and we would help get charges filed. The unfortunate circumstance was that the culture at that time was such that other family members would visit with the victim and encourage the victim to drop the charges; family members seeing and knowing about the abuse not only on this occasion for which charges were being filed, but also the abuse that had occurred through the years. And family members would quite often prevail; and, as a result, charges would sometimes be dropped.

I regret that we went through this time in our history where women were not treated with the dignity and respect that they should be accorded. A lot of that has gone away, and I will say more about a lot of this in just a moment, but there is still enough of it for us to band together and for us to answer the clarion call for help that these women present to us on a daily basis.

I am honored to tell you that we have with us now another Member of Congress from the 40th District of California. She serves on the Appropriations Committee, and I am honored to yield to the Honorable LUCILLE ROYBAL-ALLARD.

Ms. ROYBAL-ALLARD. Mr. Speaker, let me begin by commending Congressman GREEN for his leadership in helping to highlight the tragedy of domestic violence in our country and for arranging today's Special Order.

While it is true that we have made some progress toward addressing violence against women, the fact remains that nearly one-third of women in the United States still report being physically or sexually abused by a partner in their lifetime. Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking lead to severe social health and economic consequences for women and our communities, with the estimated cost of violence exceeding \$70 billion each year.

Our Nation's economic crisis has hammered home the sad truth that financial concerns often keep victims in abusive relationships. Studies indicate that economic independence is a key predictor of whether a victim will be able to break the cycle of violence and leave her abuser.

Far too often, it is difficult for victims to maintain employment in the aftermath of domestic violence, especially if they require time off for medical appointments, court appearances, and for their own safety. As a result, women who experience domestic violence are more likely than other women to be unemployed, to suffer from health problems that impact employability and job performance, to report lower personal income, and to rely on welfare. These poor economic outcomes often perpetuate the abuse.

For the last 16 years, I have introduced legislation that would help ensure victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking have the fi-

nancial independence they need to break free from their abusers.

The Security and Financial Empowerment Act, or SAFE Act, would allow survivors to take unpaid time off from work to make necessary court appearances, seek legal assistance, and get help with safety planning without the fear of losing their job. The SAFE Act would prohibit employers or insurance providers from basing hiring or insurance coverage decisions on an individual's history of abuse, and ensure eligibility for unemployment benefits should a survivor be forced to leave her job due to circumstances stemming from domestic violence.

The SAFE Act empowers victims of domestic violence with greater employment protections and increased economic stability to break the all-too-common cycle of dependence and abuse.

As Domestic Violence Awareness Month comes to an end, let us not forget the victims of domestic violence. I ask my colleagues to join me in ensuring financial freedom for those suffering from domestic abuse by cosponsoring the SAFE Act, and I encourage my colleagues to support Congressman GREEN's H. Res. 392 to make sure that we continue to highlight this tragedy of domestic violence in our country so that one day there will be no domestic violence; it will be unnecessary for us to be here in the Halls of Congress talking about this tragedy.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I thank the gentlelady. I want to thank the gentlelady for the work she has done here in Congress over the years to eliminate domestic violence.

This has been a bipartisan effort, Mr. Speaker. I am proud to tell you that S. 47, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, this bill passed the House of Representatives with bipartisan support. In the House the vote was 286-138. It passed the Senate with bipartisan support. It was 78-22. The bill had this bipartisan support because it embraced women not only who are known to us as people from our communities, but also there were some communities that were embraced that have not been traditionally a part of the bill.

It helped American Indian women because at one time tribal courts could not take on persons who had sexually assaulted women because they were non-Indians. Well, the bill addressed this. It also addressed the LGBT community which had not been included. It doesn't matter what your sexual preference is, domestic violence can be imposed upon you. And when you are hurt, you need help. This bill provided the help needed for women regardless of race, creed, color, origin. Regardless of your sexual preference, you can get help pursuant to S. 47, which received bipartisan support.

I wanted to tell you that annually my friend from the State of Texas, the Honorable TED POE, works with me and I with him. We alternate years of taking the lead on this issue. He has had a

career that has paralleled mine. When he was a prosecutor, I was a defense attorney. He became a district court judge in Texas right around the time I became the judge of a justice court. Here in Congress, we have sought to work together on many bills and many pieces of legislation, but I am proudest of what we do on domestic violence.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month is one where he and I have collaborated to work together to make sure that we get this issue exposed to the public so we can continue the process of elimination. I am proud to tell you that he represents the Second Congressional District of Texas, serves on Foreign Affairs as well as the Judiciary Committee, and I am proud to tell you that I consider him a friend, not in the sense that we politely say it here in Congress when we say "my friend." I consider him a friend in the sense that he and I have developed a real kinship and relationship. Although we don't always agree, we always try to work together for the good of our State, city, and for the good of women who are being impacted by domestic violence.

I yield to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE).

Mr. POE of Texas. I thank the gentleman for yielding, and I appreciate those comments.

It is true, Congressman GREEN, you and I, our careers have mirrored. We spent time at the courthouse together, you as a defense lawyer, me as a prosecutor. We became judges at about the same time. We got elected to Congress at the same time. We have known each other now almost 40 years, and I want to thank you for all that time you have been serving the community of Texas. And our districts match each other in the Houston area. We share the same common boundary.

I also think it is appropriate that we are wearing purple ties. If I remember correctly, if you take red and you take blue and you mix them together, you get purple. How appropriate because this is a bipartisan endeavor where we are trying to show the horrors of domestic violence nationwide. It is not a Democrat issue; it is not a Republican. It is an American issue. And I guess it is a purple issue, if we can use that phrase.

As you have mentioned, spending time at the courthouse, I saw a lot of these types of cases, and we have come a long way. And, yes, it is true, I remember the days when domestic violence, when some spouse would beat up another spouse, no matter how bad the injuries, unless it was death, many times the police would say, This is a family problem. It is not a criminal problem; it is not a public problem. It is a family problem. They have to deal with it.

Because of that, many women, primarily, were rejected from prosecuting their spouse when they beat them up. As Congressman GREEN mentioned, the days of spouse filing charges and then being pressured by sometimes the

batterer or family members to drop the charges, and then charges would be dropped. I found that frustrating as a prosecutor, and you found it frustrating when you were trying to help those women get those cases filed.

We finally did something in Texas that made a whole lot of sense. We took the spouse, the victim, out of the prosecution process. So it was the State of Texas versus the guy, and the spouse really had no control over the prosecution. The spouse certainly couldn't drop the charges. It took it off of her burden, and made those people who wanted the case dropped to deal with the State rather than the victim. That was a good thing because then those people started getting prosecuted.

□ 1600

JIM COSTA, a Democrat from California, he and I started the Victims' Rights Caucus when I came to Congress. It is a bipartisan caucus, a purple caucus, of both sides that advocate on the part of victims with about 85, 90 members.

One of the things that we are very concerned about, of course, is spouses that are victims of crime. I say that because when somebody beats up someone in the family, it is not the fault of the victim; it is the fault of the person that does the assaulting. The victim is not to blame. We have to get it through to our culture—and I think we are gradually doing that—to understand it is not the victim's fault. It is the person who commits the crime, commits the assault.

The most influential person in my life was my grandmother. God bless her. She lived to 99 years of age. She told me a lot of things and was very wise.

You would be glad to know, Congressman GREEN, she was an old-fashioned Texas Yellow Dog Democrat. She never forgave me for being a Republican. Anyway, we got past that.

She said that you never hurt somebody you claim you love. That was a true statement when she told me, and it is still a true statement. You never hurt somebody you claim you love, especially in the family situation. That is something that we need to live by and hold people accountable when they violate that important rule of life.

You mentioned the Violence Against Women Act. That is a good piece of legislation. I supported that for the reasons you mentioned, but also it does something else. It helps the immigrant community. Too often we find in Houston, where we have a lot of immigrants from all over the world, that someone that is in the United States, if they are assaulted by someone else that is in the United States, both undocumented, the batterer tells the victim, If you call the police, I am going to send you back to where you came from. He can't do that, but she thinks he can do that, so she doesn't call the police, and this guy gets away with hurting her. Plus, she continues to be victimized.

We changed that law because of VAWA. They can come forward. They can get a special visa. They can testify. This person can get prosecuted as they should. It is a good piece of legislation, and we certainly should be enforcing the rules under the VAWA law.

People that I have come in contact with over the years have impacted me. Of course, many of those have been victims of crime, many of those victims of domestic violence. One that I met after I came here to Congress was a wonderful lady that lives real close to us. She lives over in Maryland, Yvette Cade. She has made her story public, so I will use her name.

Yvette Cade was estranged from her husband. Her husband was under a protective order to leave her alone. She didn't have a lawyer. She didn't have someone like you, Mr. GREEN, representing her. She had to represent herself. When the protective order came to be renewed, she represented herself in the courtroom, and the judge denied the protective order. It was withdrawn.

Soon after the judge made that horrible decision, the estranged husband found her over at the video store where she worked supporting herself. He walked in carrying a jar of gasoline, and he poured it over Yvette Cade, and he set her on fire, that wonderful, precious lady. It is all on videotape from the store.

I don't know how she did it, but she survived. A passerby saw what happened. He helped her. He put the fire out. She has had numerous surgeries, and she is alive. Today, she advocates on behalf of victims who are abused in the family. She is quite a remarkable person, and she is a victim of crime.

Our culture needs to treat these people in a special way, whether it is to prosecute the criminal or to take care of them when their physical and mental needs need to be met. We are doing a better job of that. This month, we recognize those wonderful people who have been abused.

We still have the problem of convincing them that the crime is not their fault. They are embarrassed so often. As I told victims of crime as a prosecutor and even as a judge: You don't need to be embarrassed for what happened to you. The person who did it needs to be embarrassed.

It was part of our responsibility, I think, in the criminal justice system to make sure that happened. I won't go into all those types of cases that you are familiar with in unique sentencing, Mr. GREEN, but we made sure that the criminal knew that he was to blame and the victim was not to blame for that conduct.

After hearing 25,000 felony cases at the courthouse—and, Congressman GREEN, I am not going to relate all 25,000 of them, but I would like to mention another one. When we think of domestic violence, we need to remember not only the spouse, but we need to

think about the children that are involved, too, because many times they are the victims of domestic violence.

There was a young girl who was a second-grader, and, like a lot of kids today, she rode the bus back and forth to elementary school. I will call her "June." One afternoon, she is riding the schoolbus home, and she wouldn't get off the bus. She just sat there, and she was literally gripping that bar that is on the seat in front of you. Finally, the schoolbus driver came back and tried to talk to her and asked her, Why won't you get off the bus? This is your home. This is where you live.

June replied, I don't want to get off, because I am only safe when I am on the bus going to school, at school, and when I am on the bus going home. Bad things happen when I get off the bus.

You see, she went back into a situation where she was constantly battered by the "live-in boyfriend" is what I am going to call him. Because of the bus driver and doing what she did, they called the police and an investigation took place. That person was prosecuted; but, more importantly, June is safe and her mother is safe.

We need to understand that victims of domestic violence live, many times, quiet lives of desperation and fear. It is our responsibility as Congress to eliminate that the best we can, to provide services for victims, to let them understand that crime is not their fault, that it is the fault of the perpetrator. On the other end, we need to make sure those perpetrators get the justice that they deserve at the courthouse and they are held accountable for those actions that they commit against someone in their family.

Mr. Speaker, Grandma was right. You never hurt somebody you claim you love.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I thank my colleague very much, and I thank you for your many words expressing what you actually witnessed. Yours was a testimony, not just a recitation, from something that was accorded you by some other person. You were there to see what happened, and you and I know that there is still great work to be done.

In our State of Texas, in 2012, domestic violence caused 11,994 adults to need shelter, Mr. Speaker. It caused 14,534 children to need shelter, Mr. Speaker. It caused 36,831 adults to need nonresidential services, counseling, legal assistance. It caused 15,694 children to need nonresidential services. Unfortunately, 26.2 percent of the adults were denied shelter because of a lack of space.

Mr. Speaker, there is still great work to be done, and I am honored to ask, at this time, another colleague to speak. However, would you kindly advise me as to the amount of time I have left.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. YOH). The gentleman from Texas has 25 minutes remaining.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I ask so that Members may be

aware. We have a few Members left to speak, and we want to make sure that every Member has some time.

Mr. Speaker, I am honored to ask the Honorable BARBARA LEE to move to the podium and consume an appropriate amount of time. She is my very dear friend from the great State of California, the 13th Congressional District, who sits on Appropriations and who has been a longtime champion of protecting women and protecting people and is truly a champion for the least, the last, and the lost.

I might also add, Mr. Speaker, that she was the chair of the Congressional Black Caucus, and I was proud to serve under her leadership.

Ms. LEE of California. First, let me thank Congressman AL GREEN for that very humbling introduction, for your tremendous leadership, and for bringing us all together with, of course, Congressman POE, and for really pulling together this Special Order in recognition of October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. It is so critical that we continue to raise the level of awareness in a bipartisan manner until we rid our country and the world of abuse and domestic violence.

As someone who unfortunately understands domestic violence on a very personal level, a deeply personal level, I know how traumatic the experience is, and, yes, I know what the support system and how important the support system is needed to emerge as a survivor. I also know that domestic violence is not only physical, but it is also emotional. It is brutal. It is dehumanizing to the battered and the batterer, and without strong and enforceable criminal laws and services, one's life can be shattered and destroyed. I know this from personal experience.

Also, as a psychiatric social worker by profession, battered women's syndrome will totally destroy a woman's life if we don't address the counseling and mental health services that will really help women rid themselves of the syndrome which comes as a result of a lifetime of abuse.

As a member of the California Legislature, I was very proud to write California's Violence Against Women Act and many domestic violence bills that were actually signed into law, Congressman GREEN, by a Republican Governor, Governor Pete Wilson, and I continue to make this a priority in my congressional work.

In my district, there are several agencies, such as A Safe Place, which is a victim-centered agency. Agencies such as this, they do wonderful work on a minimum budget on issues and services and housing related to and for victims of abuse; and we need to enhance and raise the level of funding because they do wonderful work, as I said, with minimal resources.

We know that staying in a shelter or working with an advocate significantly improves the victim's quality of life. It is my hope that we use Domestic Violence Awareness Month to recommit

ourselves to fighting the scourge of domestic violence against men and women.

We have made accomplishments over the decades on this issue, including the passage of the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and the Violence Against Women Act, which we fought hard to get reauthorized earlier this year under the bold and tremendous leadership of Congresswoman GWEN MOORE and Minority Leader NANCY PELOSI.

These pieces of legislation have led to an increase of nearly 51 percent in domestic violence reporting by women and a 37 percent increase in reporting for men. This is truly a significant impact. Yet, sadly, challenges remain.

Around the world, nearly one in three women have been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Here in the United States, as many as one in four American women report being physically or sexually abused by a husband or a boyfriend at least once in their lives.

In my home State of California, the statistics are even more staggering. According to the Women's Health Survey, approximately 40 percent of California women experience physical, intimate partner violence in their lifetime. Of these women, three out of four of them had children under the age of 18 at home.

Children who see or experience domestic violence have a much greater chance to either become victims or perpetrators as adults. They are also more likely to attempt suicide, abuse drugs and alcohol, run away from home, engage in teenage prostitution, and commit other crimes.

Beyond the cost to children, domestic violence affects the economy with as many as half of domestic violence victims reporting the loss of a job due at least in part to domestic violence. In fact, domestic violence costs employers in the United States as much as \$13 billion each year, and it costs our health care system upwards of \$5.8 billion, including \$4 billion in direct health care expenses.

When we talk about the state of employment and the cost of health care, especially for women, the economic impacts of domestic violence and what we must do to eradicate it must be part of that conversation.

□ 1615

We must prioritize investments in programs that domestic violence survivors rely on when escaping their abuser, including domestic violence programs and other programs of the safety net.

When we fail to make the proper investments, women bear the consequences. Thousands of requests for domestic violence services go unmet. Thousands of calls to the National Domestic Violence Hotline go unanswered. In times of economic downturn, the rates of domestic violence tend to increase. That is why this reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act was so very important.

Not only were we able to increase outreach to victims on college campuses and expand protections for victims living on tribal lands, but for the first time, first time, we extended access to protections for immigrant and LGBT victims.

So as a member of the Appropriations Committee, I am going to continue to fight for robust funding at all levels, so that we can continue to provide victims with the services they need. With strong investments, we can address this crisis and end domestic violence, once and for all.

Although we have made great progress, we cannot claim victory. October is a critical time to raise awareness of what continues to be a pervasive issue in our country.

But we must remember that for women, children and men who are experiencing or who have experienced domestic violence, every day must be a day of awareness. So we must support all of the legislation and funding efforts that will indicate that finally, mind you, finally, we will not need Domestic Violence Awareness Month ever again because we have put an end to domestic violence.

Thank you again, Mr. GREEN.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I thank you—and I also thank you for raising the issue of domestic violence against men. We talk quite often about it being against women, and there is good reason. The overwhelming empirical evidence connotes that women are the largest group of victims of domestic violence, so I thank you for broadening the issue for us. Thank you very much.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, I am honored to tell you that we have a Congressman from the State of Florida—I was reared in Florida, went to Florida A&M University.

He serves the 18th District of Florida, serves on Financial Services, and he is committed to working across the aisle. He makes a concerted effort to achieve bipartisanship. He is a champion for fair play.

I also want you to know that he understands that, as we do this, as we try to end this scourge on society known as domestic violence, that it is more than simply an issue of violence; it also has economic components to it. He has tried to cause us to understand some of these components, but also, that it is a moral issue.

I would now ask my friend, who accorded me this tie that is purple—the color purple in the tie, as I understand it, represents courage, survival, honor and dedication, dedication to ending domestic violence. Of course, purple is being worn today to spread awareness of domestic violence.

I now yield as much time as he may consume to my friend, the Honorable PATRICK MURPHY.

Mr. MURPHY of Florida. Thank you, Mr. GREEN, for organizing this special hour.

I also want to thank Mr. POE, Ms. EDWARDS and Mrs. ELLMERS for their leadership on this important issue.

I rise today to speak out against domestic violence and to demand that Congress act in a bipartisan manner to fight back against this plague on our country. The domestic violence statistic rates in our country are staggering. One out of every three women will be the victim of domestic violence in their lifetime. Four are murdered by their intimate partner every day in the United States.

Further, a woman is battered in the United States every 15 seconds. You do the math; that is 240 incidents every hour.

We, as a society, have a responsibility to work to protect the most vulnerable among us, and must do everything we can to address these unacceptable rates of domestic violence. That is why one of the first pieces of legislation I cosponsored as a Member of Congress was the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

Protecting people from violence by their partners should not be a partisan issue, and it was appalling in the last Congress that such vital legislation got caught up in this partisan gridlock.

With that in mind, I am thrilled to see Members from both sides of the aisle speaking today on this important issue. You will notice both Democrats and Republicans wearing purple pins or purple ties to highlight October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Domestic violence is not a partisan issue, and not just a woman's issue. It is a family issue, it is a community issue, it is an economic issue and a moral issue. That is why I specifically recruited male colleagues to participate in this Special Order hour, and you will see many of them here today wearing purple ties.

We, as men, can help draw awareness not only to how important it is to work toward ending domestic violence, but also to the fact that domestic violence is an issue that we have a responsibility to engage and not to dismiss as only a women's issue.

As role models and other males, we have a crucial part in this fight, and stopping domestic violence will only occur when the main perpetrators of these crimes, which are men, learn to stop hurting their partners. We, as men, not only can, but we must make addressing this issue a priority.

On International Women's Day, I hosted a roundtable discussion at a shelter in my district called SafeSpace, where I heard from both survivors and advocates about the challenges they face to keep women and children safe, and the importance of Federal funding to keep these programs operating. This roundtable highlighted the urgency of working together to address this pressing issue.

I am honored to have Jill Borowicz, the CEO of the shelter that hosted this important roundtable, here in attendance with us today and want to take this opportunity to thank her for her work on behalf of all the survivors of domestic abuse.

Unfortunately, what we are doing here today almost was not able to take place, due to the government shutdown. Jill knows all too well what the shutdown did back home and what the effects of it were on our district and across the country.

One of the less-talked about effects of the shutdown was its impact on shelters and services like SafeSpace that were forced to close their doors and suspend services for more than a week because VAWA funds were inaccessible.

Let me repeat: the government shutdown directly prevented women and children who were facing the threat of domestic violence from receiving services and shelter. This is unconscionable.

While the crisis may have been manufactured, the shutdown was very real, and the consequences were also real. It has shown that partisanship and dysfunction in Congress are a serious threat to the prevention of domestic violence. I hope we can all agree that this should no longer be tolerated.

I look forward to working together with my colleagues, both male and female, and Members from both parties to continue to fund important programs that help provide assistance and shelter to the victims of domestic violence, resources to law enforcement to help them adequately address these issues on the ground, and investments in programs that can help stop and break the vicious cycle of domestic violence in our communities.

Again, I want to thank Mr. GREEN for his leadership on this issue. It is important we bring this to the forefront. No matter where you are from or what party you are from, this is something that needs to be discussed.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I thank my fellow Floridian. I, of course, am from Texas now, but my roots are in Florida, and I thank you so much.

Mr. Speaker, how much time do we have left?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman has 12 minutes remaining.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am honored at this time to recognize another Texan, a Texan from the 23rd District, who served 22 years, Mr. Speaker, in the State house, a Texan who serves on the Agriculture Committee, a Texan who is a strong supporter of domestic awareness, who voted for the reauthorization of the VAWA, and I might say, a Texan who started his career in Congress extending his hand across the aisle. He is one who not only preaches bipartisanship, he practices it.

I am honored to yield as much time as he may consume to my friend, the Honorable PETE GALLEGO.

Mr. GALLEGO. Thank you so much. I appreciate very much, Congressman GREEN, your leadership on this issue. It is incredibly important.

As I listened to Congressman MURPHY and others talk on this issue, and you realize that one out of every three

women will feel the impact of domestic violence in her lifetime, you have to realize that, even among the people in this room, we know people who have been impacted by domestic violence.

All of us have a mom. Many of us have sisters. Domestic violence can impact anyone. Even though it is not openly spoken about many times, even though it is not openly addressed in our society, and even though many feel that it is something that could never happen to them, the truth is, it could happen to anybody, and it could happen to people other than women. Fourteen percent of the victims of domestic violence are men.

In 2012, in Texas alone, 114 people were killed. In the district that I represent, from El Paso to San Antonio, there were eight cases of domestic violence.

Everyone here, many of you have met my son, who has become the center of my universe. I will tell you that children are incredibly important. They are certainly important to me and to the Members of this Chamber, the Members of this body.

The truth is that kids are also impacted by violence because, many times, the child is also assaulted. In fact, according to a Task Force report, in several instances, the young children at the scene of the crime were also attacked, and, in fact, they were stabbed or strangled or shot or kidnapped, or some violence was committed on the children.

These numbers are heartbreaking. There are far too many people impacted. The sad part is that most of the time there are many signs of trouble. You can see it. There is a time in the life of every problem where it is big enough to see but still small enough to solve.

Researchers and service providers have already identified some common characteristics that help predict the risk factor as a precursor to intimate partner murders. Stalking, for example.

Stalking ranks as a top indicator of risk. Nationally, 76 percent of those cases involve at least one episode of stalking within a year prior to the murder. One in six women report having experienced stalking which made them feel very fearful or believe that they or someone close to them would be harmed or killed.

Intimate partner violence manifests itself from dehumanizing attitudes and beliefs, and it results in cruelty, brutality, degradation of the victims' physical, mental and spiritual well-being.

Ninety-nine percent of all woman who have died as a result of domestic violence never stayed in a shelter. Ninety-five percent had no contact with a certified domestic violence center within 5 years of their death.

There is help out there. We just need to get people to the help, and the only way that we can do that is if more people are aware of the resources that are

available to victims of domestic violence.

As I said, all of us, statistically, we are going to know someone who has been impacted by domestic violence, and it is very important that we all work together to make sure that they all have the help that they need.

On any given day in the U.S., over 60,000 women and kids—60,000, think about that—60,000 women and kids are residing in domestic violence shelters. The shelters provide a critical, critical, critical service. It is up to us, our States, our communities and our fellow citizens to make a difference, to make sure that we step up to the plate and keep these resources available, keep the help where we need the help, so that we can stop those hearts from breaking, we can mend those lives, and we can help those kids.

I had the great privilege, as Mr. GREEN alluded to, of serving in the Texas Legislature for a long time, including service as chairman of the committee of jurisdiction, the Committee on Criminal Jurisprudence, and I carried a lot of legislation for victims of domestic violence.

I am very proud of those activities. I am very proud of that opportunity to be of service, and I hope that all 435 Members of this body and the 100 Members on the other side of this building will, all together, in a very bipartisan fashion, stand up and say, Let's put an end to domestic violence.

Thank you so much for your time.

□ 1630

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I thank my colleague from the State of Texas.

I would also mention to my colleague that, unfortunately, one study concluded that 10,401 domestic violence victims reached out for help but were turned away because of a lack of resources. There is still great work to be done, and I thank you for continuing to do this great work. God bless you.

At this time, Mr. Speaker, we have another Texan, from the 18th Congressional District in Houston, Texas, who serves on Homeland Security as well as Judiciary. We are going to ask that our friend, the Honorable SHEILA JACKSON LEE, move to the podium.

And how much time remains, Mr. Speaker?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Texas has 6 minutes remaining.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I ask that Members govern themselves accordingly, with 6 minutes left.

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Let me thank the gentleman from Texas for his service and for his commitment to an issue that is so vital and important to the Nation, and that is, the protection of all Americans from domestic violence. There is a long history of the journey of this Congress to responding to the cry of women and men, both in the civilian life and in the United States military.

I rise today to acknowledge and commemorate Domestic Violence Preven-

tion Month. I remember the journey that we took in getting to the Violence Against Women Act with our former colleague, the late chair of the Judiciary Committee, Chairman Hyde. I remember in the early stages of the 1990s the attempt to reauthorize this legislation.

The good news was that Chairman Hyde, a Republican, Ranking Member CONYERS, and Senators on both sides of the aisle joined together in one big room to come together and acknowledge the importance of protecting women; and then, of course, to acknowledge that violence, domestic violence, is a disease, an epidemic that spreads beyond the question of whether you are male or female.

The loss of life that has come about because people have not found a refuge is staggering. And for those of us who have heard firsthand stories—as a member of the Houston area Women's Center, the board that, if you will, had supervision over local Women's Centers, where women could go. I have known and have seen stories that would argue so vigorously for more funding and more recognition and more laws that would protect these women.

So I am glad that even though the journey was even longer to get the Violence Against Women Act passed in the last Congress that we ultimately, after the many petitions that we were involved in, saw a bipartisan vote in the House and the Senate—much longer in the House—that allowed it to go to the President's desk.

So my remarks, as I summarize, are to say that this is an ongoing cause. Domestic violence comes from tension and pressure, but it results in violence that culminates with the loss of life. Time after time, women and children suffer a loss of life through violence by a spouse or a loved one; and, of course, we know that it occurs with men. Time after time, women in the United States military suffer from the act of violence, domestic violence, or violence against women.

So I want to thank the gentleman for giving me the opportunity to at least acknowledge that this is a somber occasion, and there is great need for continued support.

My last sentence, Mr. GREEN: you mentioned resources. I hope as we leave this floor that we will all reinforce the elimination of the sequester and a budget process that will allow the funding of vital programs like the Violence Against Women Act.

I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. I thank the gentlewoman.

And because time is of the essence, I will move quickly to the gentleman from the 41st District of California, the Honorable MARK TAKANO.

Mr. TAKANO. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I stand today with my colleagues in recognizing Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

The unfortunate reality is that domestic violence is something that affects every community in America, as



it touches every race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Millions of domestic violence incidents are reported each year, and many more go unreported. Too often, domestic violence remains within the confines of the household, as many victims do not contact law enforcement or go public, often out of fear.

When it was first observed 26 years ago, Domestic Violence Awareness Month sought to shine a light on this tragic reality by educating the public, empowering the victims, and punishing the offenders. And in the 26 years since, we have made great progress, partly due to the Violence Against Women Act, which provides critical support to programs for victims and their families, as well as resources for law enforcement and community organizations.

With a 51 percent increase in reporting by women and a 37 percent increase in reporting by men, the results have been nothing short of incredible. Domestic violence is wrong, and no victim should be hesitant to report it. I encourage every American who feels threatened or who knows someone in a dangerous situation to contact law enforcement or a community organization. Together, we can strive to end domestic violence abuse in our communities.

I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. AL GREEN of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I do thank you for your indulgence. You have been liberal with the time.

And I want to remind persons that while we do this on an annual basis in the month of October, we do want to make domestic violence awareness an everyday activity.

I yield back the balance of my time.

#### HEALTH CARE AND VOTER REGISTRATION ENROLLMENT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 3, 2013, the Chair recognizes the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GOHMERT) for 30 minutes.

Mr. GOHMERT. Mr. Speaker, this has been an interesting week for a number of reasons. I would like to call to attention a letter that was written by Chairman DARRELL ISSA, my friend from California, to Secretary Kathleen Sebelius at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services this week.

The first paragraph, after saying, "Dear Madam Secretary" says:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is investigating the insurance exchange application, online at [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov), established by the Department of Health and Human Services. As part of this investigation, we are writing to request information related to voter registration data collected during the application process.

On further down, the letter says:

While HHS and its contractors continue to struggle with the task of processing applications for health insurance coverage, the agency uses the Web site to collect voter registration information. Once an applicant

completes the online application for health care coverage, a dialogue box appears asking, "Would you like to register to vote?" In light of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993, also known as the Motor Voter Act, which requires any agency that provides public assistance to provide individuals with an opportunity to register to vote, the Department decided to include the voter registration option on the health care application. The inclusion of this voter registration may give applicants the impression that registering to vote is somehow tied to receiving health care benefits, such as insurance subsidies.

Given the well-documented flaws with the health care application process, the public lacks confidence that HHS has the ability to safeguard applicants' voter information. Documents reviewed by the committee show that applicants may submit personal information over the Internet during the application process without encryption, potentially exposing personally identifiable information to interception and abuse.

Further down it says:

Further, it is unclear how HHS uses the voting information it collects once a user submits this data on the Web site. Applicants rightly expect that only State election officials will have access to their information. Voter registration contains important personal details that are valuable to various individuals and organizations.

Toward the end, Chairman ISSA says:

These facts raise questions as to what happens when the same individual expresses the desire to register to vote multiple times. HHS does not appear to have the capacity to differentiate between duplicates and first-time applicants.

In short, it is unclear what happens to voter registration information once HHS receives it. Applicants have an expectation that the Federal Government is not transmitting private information to third parties, knowingly or unknowingly.

But interesting questions were raised by my friend Chairman ISSA. It should also be noted that the chairman of the Subcommittee on National Security, my friend from Utah, JASON CHAFFETZ, also signed that letter. So that has certainly caused some digging in my office to find out what this was about.

And then we find information about [www.demos.org](http://www.demos.org). They have a report by Lisa J. Danetz called "Building a Healthy Democracy: Registering 68 Million People To Vote Through Health Benefit Exchanges."

Well, that is interesting. It makes you wonder what they are up to. They are involved in this [www.healthcare.gov](http://www.healthcare.gov), apparently. And their own information from [demos.org](http://demos.org) says they are going to use the health benefit exchanges, apparently, to try to register 68 million people to vote.

So while people in America—and I have talked to many who are just scared because they have got someone sick in their family. They have lost their insurance that the President promised they could keep. They are scared about the superhigh deductibles they have gotten. They are scared that under ObamaCare they have been sentenced to go from full-time work to part-time work, which means, as I have heard from some, that, gee, that means we have now had to go on public assist-

ance because I never wanted welfare, didn't need welfare until the so-called Affordable Care Act forced us into it.

So people are concerned all over America. The majority want ObamaCare gone. The Web site is not working.

And then we find out that, actually, the Web site seems to be as concerned about getting people registered to vote and getting their invaluable voter information as they are about dealing with the crisis in American lives involving their health care and their health insurance.

You have got people with ulterior motives. They are apparently not just signing people up from the goodness of their hearts because Demos makes clear in their own information, We are going to use the health benefit exchanges to register voters.

Well, now, who would they be registering to vote? Because we are all in favor of people eligible to vote voting. Although we know that the Attorney General has sued States like Texas, even though the Supreme Court has made clear that Indiana's law requiring a photo ID, the Attorney General's rules that require a photo ID to get in to see him, the Democratic National Committee requiring photo IDs to get into their convention, having to have a photo ID to get alcohol or cigarettes or basically to get on a plane or get on most any conveyance in interstate commerce, you have got to have a photo ID. And States like Texas have said, If you can't afford it, then just fill out the oath, and we will take care of it for you.

□ 1645

So, on the one hand, we have an Attorney General and Department of Justice doing everything they possibly can, even in the face of a Supreme Court decision saying photo ID requirements are okay. They still are going after States, which I would humbly submit, Mr. Speaker, disenfranchises legitimate voters when the Attorney General of the United States takes action to prevent States from preventing fraudulent votes.

I was shocked when people called out for international observers to come watch our own election process. This is America. We don't need international observers to watch our process, so I thought. And yet international observers watched our process of voting and were absolutely shocked that we were so cavalier about who got to vote.

No identification requirements. Clearly, people were in a position to vote more than once if they wanted to. People were in a position to vote who were not U.S. citizens, and people could vote multiple times.

I know in Iraq, I was over there right after their first election, and those people had to dip their fingers in permanent ink that they wore around for weeks until it finally wore off. But it made sure that, even in Iraq, they were protecting the integrity of their voting