



[Note: this letter was sent to those who took the time to write to Maria about VAWA]

Thank you for contacting me regarding the Violence Against Women Act. I appreciate hearing from you on this important issue.

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT) and Senator Michael Crapo (R-ID) introduced the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013 (S. 47) on January 22, 2013. As an original cosponsor of this important legislation, I fought to help secure strong, bipartisan passage of this bill in the Senate on February 12, 2013, and passage out of the House of Representatives on February 28, 2013. President Obama signed the bill into law (P.L. 113-4) on March 7, 2013.

Reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act is a major step forward to better protect all victims of domestic violence. In Washington state, law enforcement receives more than 30,000 domestic violence calls a year. On any given day in 2011, domestic violence programs served 1,884 people in the state. Last year, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) supported 32 organizations in Washington state.

This legislation has also helped law enforcement crack down on violence against "mail order brides," which sadly has taken the lives of Washington state women in the past. Anastasia King and Susana Blackwell were mail order brides who both came to Washington state to start new lives with men that they believed loved them. Their lives were brutally cut short when their husbands murdered them after subjecting them to repeated domestic abuse. That's why I championed the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act – which became part of the Violence Against Women Act (P.L. 109-162) in 2005 – to empower foreign-born fiancés to learn if their spouse has a history of violent crime. This reauthorization of VAWA improves upon that provision by requiring marriage brokers to provide foreign fiancés with a record of any domestic violence their potential spouse might have committed. Additionally, the bill also reauthorized programs funded under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act through 2017.

The reauthorization also includes critical improvements to extend protection to women in tribal communities. Nearly 40 percent of American Indian women will endure domestic violence in their lifetime. Compare that with figures from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that estimate 24 percent of all women in the United States will experience domestic violence in their lifetimes. Non-Indians commit 88 percent of all violent crimes against women. This reauthorization gives tribes the tools they need to hold these offenders accountable.

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is a bipartisan measure. Since it was first enacted in 1994, it has been reauthorized twice – in the year 2000 and again in 2005, when it passed the Senate by Unanimous Consent. Since the bill's enactment in 1994, domestic violence in the U.S. has decreased by 53 percent.

Sincerely,  
Maria Cantwell  
United States Senator

For future correspondence with my office, please visit my website at  
<http://cantwell.senate.gov/contact/>