



NATIONAL SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

February 1, 2012

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Leahy and Senator Crapo:

On behalf of the National Sheriffs' Association (NSA) and 3,079 elected sheriffs nationwide, I am writing to express our support for the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act (VAWA).

NSA and the nation's sheriffs recognizes the extreme seriousness that the crimes of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking have on law enforcement, victims, and communities across the nation. Originally established in 1994, VAWA works to increase officer and victim safety, while striving to prevent future abuse, by providing resources to law enforcement agencies to enhance their core programs and policies, as well as to reaffirm the commitment to reform systems, that affect victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking.

The reauthorization of VAWA would continue to enable law enforcement agencies across the country to adequately address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, stalking, and sex trafficking crimes by expanding funding for programs that recognize the concerns and needs of victims. Furthermore, VAWA supports the key collaboration between the victims' services community; health care community; and law enforcement to ensure that all victims are receiving the critical treatment and services necessary after a crime has occurred.

However, we do have one point of concern regarding the VAWA reauthorization involving PREA (Prison Rape Elimination Act) standards as they apply to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). NSA strongly believes that sexual violence and abuse have no place in our correctional facilities. As such, NSA has been working closely with the Department of Justice (DOJ) on PREA to ensure that the final standards take into consideration the vast differences between jails, which sheriffs largely operate, versus prisons; thus enabling for the efficient and effective implementation in jails nationwide.

Title X of the VAWA reauthorization would require DHS to establish and implement PREA standards for DHS detention facilities. As you may be aware, many sheriffs contract with DHS to house criminal aliens in their jails. As sheriffs will need to comply with PREA standards when finally established by the DOJ, NSA would ask that you, and the Senate Judiciary Committee, ensure that the VAWA reauthorization language clarifies that DHS PREA standards need to be consistent with DOJ PREA standards. This would ensure that there are not differing standards for jails based on the federal, state, or local detainees held, as well as help with the swift and successful implementation of final PREA standards.

While the law enforcement community, and society as a whole, has made great strides in combating such crimes as domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, sex trafficking, and dating

violence since the original enactment of VAWA, there is still more work that still needs to be done. The reauthorization of VAWA will enable the continued partnership among sheriffs and victims' advocates and service providers to protect victims and prevent future victimization throughout the United States.

Senator Leahy and Senator Crapo, the National Sheriffs' Association thanks you for your leadership on this important issue in the 112th Congress.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul H. Fitzgerald". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sheriff Paul H. Fitzgerald
President