Wisconsin Victim Advocates Disappointed in Violence Against Women Act Rollbacks

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(Madison)?Today, with a party-line vote, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that rolls back critical protections for victims of domestic violence. The vote is part of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) reauthorization process.

Last month, the Senate passed a bipartisan bill to renew VAWA by a vote of 68 to 31. The House bill that passed today (H.R. 4970) lacks protections for Native American women, lesbian, gay and transgender victims, and immigrant victims. H.R. 4970 also repeals current systems that protect immigrant victims, systems that were included in previous bipartisan reauthorizations.

?Laws that harm victims have no place in VAWA,? said Patti Seger, executive director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WCADV). ?In some cases, the House bill would require that the government check with the abuser before a victim can get protection. Imagine putting the safety of an abuse victim in the hands of her abuser. This poses an unacceptable risk.?
Over 325 anti-violence organizations across the country voiced opposition to the House bill before the vote.

?Studies have shown that for every dollar we invest in VAWA, we save almost ten dollars in prevented costs, including health care and law enforcement expenditures,? said Seger. ?This bill creates new bureaucracies, diverts money from direct services, and weakens the very programs that have been proven effective.?

As a result of today?s vote, a conference committee will likely be formed to negotiate the differences between House and Senate versions of the bill.

?We want to thank the Wisconsin members of the House who voted no today and, in particular, Representatives Baldwin and Moore, who have been leaders in advocating for VAWA,? said Seger. ?The Senate has already passed a VAWA bill that has support of Democrats and Republicans, liberals and conservatives, and retains the critical protections that have saved lives in Wisconsin and across the nation. It is our hope that the partisanship we saw today will yield to commonsense and a desire to protect all victims.?

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