

SAMPLE LETTER TO CONGRESS FOR LOCAL PROGRAMS: VAWA, FVPSA and VOCA APPROPRIATIONS

If possible, use your organizational letterhead. [Download an editable MS Word version of this letter at: www.nnedv.org/funding](http://www.nnedv.org/funding)

[Date]

The Honorable [First Name Last Name]
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

OR United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear [Senator/Representative LastName]:

Domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking directly affect at least 1 in 4 women in the United States and touch the lives of nearly all individuals. Funding through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA), and the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund has helped provide services for victims, and each year we see more victims come forward for help. Yet, devastating funding cuts in the FY 2008 Congressional Budget have hampered our ability to respond and the President's Budget for FY 2009 proposes funding cuts that will destroy services for victims. On behalf of [*who your organization serves/represents, such as "battered women in Chicago, Illinois"*] we urge you to support funding for local domestic violence programs in the FY '09 Congressional Budget.

[Insert information, statistics, and/or stories describing the need for increased/continued VAWA, FVPSA and VOCA funding in YOUR community. If you have seen an increased demand for services, have statistics on the number of victims who sought services this year, or have had to cut back on services or turn victims away due to lack of resources, talk about it. You can use your state statistics from the DV Census: www.nnedv.org/census/states/]

VAWA programs in the Labor, Health and Human Services (LHHS) budget are at the core of our response to victims and must be fully funded at \$320 million. Of particular priority for our agency is FVPSA/Battered Women's Shelters, which provides lifesaving emergency services for victims and families who are fleeing abuse. [Discuss the number of women and children you served in shelter, transitional housing, and other direct services last year.]

[Tell a success story or a story about a victim you have helped, for example: "Last year 'Maria' arrived at our shelter covered in bruises and bleeding and holding her 18 month old son. After years of abuse, she decided to leave her husband and had no where else to turn for help. While staying in our shelter, Maria was able to work with an attorney to file for divorce and enroll in our job training program. Maria dreams of having a safe home where she and her son can live in peace and we are working with her to make that dream possible.] To ensure that victims have access to these lifesaving services, we ask you to support funding the FVPSA/Battered Women's Shelter program at \$175 million in the FY '09 Congressional Budget.

In the Commerce, Justice, Science (CJS) budget a critical priority is the VOCA Fund, a key non-taxpayer funded source of support for service that help victims cope with the trauma and aftermath of violent crime. In the wake of the devastating cuts to VOCA in the FY '08 budget, it is essential that Congress protect VOCA-funded services. Unfortunately, the President's Budget again proposes eliminating the balance of the VOCA Fund. The President's FY '09 budget also proposes a crippling \$120 million cut in funding and the creation of a block grant for VAWA programs in the CJS budget. Cuts to VAWA and VOCA programs in the FY '08 Congressional Budget, combined with decreased funding at the state and local level, have already crippled services.

Without full funding for VAWA programs, women and children in [*your city and/or state*] cannot access the services they need to escape from violence. If the cap on the VOCA fund is not increased and VAWA programs are not funded, counties across the state may lose these services entirely. Without the lifesaving services provided by these programs, victims and their families will live in danger and costly crimes will continue.

In the FY '09 Congressional Budget we urge you to support full funding for VAWA programs at \$320 million in the LHHS budget and \$683 million in the CJS budget, protect the balance of the VOCA Fund and raise the VOCA Fund cap to \$770 million. With your help, [*your program name*] and other domestic violence programs nationwide can continue to help victims and their children find safety and security and build self-sufficiency.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact [*your name and program*]. We look forward to working with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,
Your Name, Organization, and Address/Contact Information