



February 9, 2009

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

SENT VIA MAIL AND FAX

RE: Protect and Restore Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding from the Crime Victims Fund.

Dear President Obama:

We are writing on behalf of the millions of victims and survivors of crime in the United States who receive critical services that help them recover from the physical, financial, emotional, spiritual and often life-threatening consequences of crime.

In 1984, Congress (including then-Senator Joseph Biden as an original cosponsor) and President Reagan joined in a bipartisan spirit to pledge the use of federal criminal fines and special assessments to support victim services through the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). This year marks the 25th anniversary of that historic occasion. Ever since, the federal government has kept this pledge by retaining all amounts deposited into the Crime Victims Fund by criminal offenders—*not taxpayers*—for the exclusive support of crime victim services. Thanks to the Crime Victims Fund, every year more than 4,400 victim assistance agencies and crime victim compensation programs in every State provide essential services to millions of victims of all types of crimes, including domestic violence, sexual assault, homicide, drunk driving, child abuse, white collar crimes, and international and domestic terrorism.

In FY 2000, because of fluctuating deposits into the Crime Victims Fund, Congress began delaying obligations from the Fund. According to congressional committee reports, the Fund was capped in order "to protect against wide fluctuations in receipts into the Fund, *and to ensure that a stable level of funding will remain available for these programs in future years.*" This commitment has been restated ever since in annual appropriations bills and through amendments to the authorizing statute.

Unfortunately, the previous Administration continually sought to renege on this pledge by rescinding the amounts that have been retained in the Crime Victims Fund and by proposing other steps that would have severely jeopardized the Fund's integrity, viability and sustainability. Thanks to Congress's overwhelming support for VOCA, in which both you and Vice-President Biden joined, those efforts were emphatically and repeatedly rejected.

We write this letter to urge your Administration in its FY 2010 budget submission to clearly reaffirm your ongoing support for VOCA and the Crime Victims Fund. This position was expressed in an April 4, 2008 letter in which you, Vice-President Biden and many of your Senate colleagues:

1. Explicitly rejected the attempts to rescind the Crime Victims Fund or to alter its original fundamental purpose to be available *exclusively* to support programs and services for crime victims;
2. Supported an annual limit on Fund obligations (the "cap") that, at a minimum, restores the amount available for state victim assistance formula grants to the FY 2006 amounts; and
3. Ensured that the Fund's Antiterrorism Emergency Reserve continues to be treated as amounts in addition to the annual cap, consistent with Congressional intent and Justice Department policy and practice.

Each of these points was made in direct response to specific provisions contained in the previous Administration's budget submissions. The unwarranted challenges to VOCA's security caused extraordinary anxiety among the thousands of victim service programs that rely on VOCA funding and the crime victims those programs serve. Indeed, the mere persistence of the previous Administration's threats to VOCA caused some states, as a preventive measure, to hold back or reduce funds from local programs. Exacerbating these anxieties, devastating cuts to the VOCA fund in FY 2008 forced many organizations to reduce services and ultimately serve fewer victims in need.

The signers of this letter represent an unprecedented coalition of crime victims, national victim advocacy organizations, state and local victim service providers, criminal justice professionals and many others. We applaud the fact that key members of your Administration, including you, Vice-President Biden and Attorney General Holder, have demonstrated such a strong and long-standing commitment to ensuring justice for crime victims. We trust that your staunch support of victims will be reflected in your FY 2010 budget by protecting the Crime Victims Fund and providing an adequate funding level to sustain and enhance vitally needed services for crime victims.

Sincerely,

National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators
American Correctional Association
American Humane Association
American Probation and Parole Association
American Society of Victimology
Arizona Voice for Crime Victims
Association of VAWA Administrators
Break the Cycle
Coalition of Pennsylvania Crime Victim Organizations
Court Appointed Special Advocates of New Jersey, Inc.
International Organization for Victim Assistance
Jewish Women International
Justice Solutions, Inc
Mary Byron Project
Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.
Mothers Against Drunk Driving
National Alliance to End Sexual Violence
National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards
National Association of Victim Service Professionals in Corrections
National Center for Victims of Crime
National Coalition Against Domestic Violence
National Council of Jewish Women
National Crime Victim Law Institute

National Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center
National Criminal Justice Association
National District Attorneys Association
National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence
National Leadership Council for Crime Victim Justice
National Network to End Domestic Violence
National Organization for Victim Assistance
National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children, Inc.
National Organization of Sisters of Color Ending Sexual Assault (SCESA)
Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN)
Sacred Circle National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women
SAFENOWPROJECT
Security On Campus, Inc.
Sheila Wellstone Institute
Stop Family Violence
Texas CASA
The National Judicial College
YWCA USA