

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Attorney General Walker Urges Congress To Support Funding Under Violence Against Women Act

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Attorney General Claude Earl Walker today joined 55 other state and territory attorneys general to urge Congress to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), Department of Justice Public Media Office Corliss Smithen announced Monday.

The attorneys general sent a letter earlier today to congressional leaders and the chairs of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees, urging lawmakers to vote to reauthorize VAWA before it expires this year, according to the release.

“Reducing domestic violence, sexual assaults and dating violence in the Virgin Islands has been a major objective of the Attorney General’s Office, and so, we know that the

VAWA grants have given us much-needed training and assistance to help reduce domestic violence,” Mr. Walker said. “Through the VAWA grants, we have been able to help DV survivors and punish their offenders. Therefore, we are very concerned that unless something is done soon by Congress then these funds might lapse, which could cause a significant increase in violence against women.”

Under VAWA, originally passed in 1994, over \$6 billion in grant funding has been awarded to government and nonprofit organizations nationwide. The grants have funded training and assistance to address and reduce domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. The grants have also funded resources and services to assist survivors, prosecute offenders and facilitate partnerships between prosecutors, judges, advocates, community organizations and health care providers, according to the release.

It added that through the grants from VAWA, victim advocates at the Virgin Islands Department of Justice have been able to provide many services to victims and their families, which include offering comfort during a stressful time of victimization; educating victims about the legal process; providing them with relevant information while cases are pending; referring victims to counselling; and accompanying them to court hearings.

In their letter, the attorneys general emphasized the importance of VAWA to reducing the rate of sexual violence toward women and addressing the devastating effects of these crimes. They urged Congress to continue funding for programs that have helped millions of domestic violence and sexual assault survivors.

Joining Attorney General Walker in submitting the letter were the attorneys general of Florida, Illinois, Alabama, Alaska, American Samoa, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, District of Columbia, Georgia, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, North Dakota, N. Mariana Islands, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Rhode Island, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, West Virginia, Wisconsin and Wyoming.