

Congress Won't Budge on VAWA: Speak Out and Take Action!

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- The House and Senate have recently passed HR 4970 (House) and S 1925 (Senate) in April and May 2012.
- Dates for conference of these bills are unknown, but could be announced at any point in time. Despite all the talk about the “blue-slip” problem, we fully expect that it can be resolved.
- The House bill is anti-survivor and fundamentally changes the purpose of VAWA. It excludes the voices of survivors and survivor’s services advocates while rolling back many protections. S. 1925 is not perfect, and section 1008 should be removed to ensure unrelated immigration policy riders are kept off. Both bills will be brought to conference so that both the House and Senate leaders can agree on a bill to send to the President – **we need to tell our legislators to start negotiations using S. 1925 as the bill that best protects ALL survivors.**

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF DOING NOTHING?

- The next three weeks are CRITICAL! This is the final push for a REAL VAWA. Your efforts count!
- While we wait for news from House and Senate leaders, anti-VAWA groups regularly lobby House leadership with the message that immigrant survivors of violence lie, defraud, and exploit the provisions of VAWA. Even though our current system adequately protects against fraud (see our talking points), these groups continue to rely on a handful of anecdotal allegations of fraud in order to falsely buttress unsubstantiated claims of systemic fraud in VAWA and U visa cases.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO IMMEDIATELY

1. Email, call or set up meetings with House leadership members Lamar Smith, Boehner and Cantors.
2. Write letters to the editor in your neighborhood. Explain why this issue matters to you. We have samples if you need them.
3. Set up meetings in your district with your Senators and Representatives. Even if they are not in district, inform the office that you want the Congressional members’ offices to hear from you.
4. Send individual stories to House leaders Smith, Boehner, Cantor and your representative about how the proposed rollbacks will hurt your clients, stop them from filing applications or further endanger survivors in dangerous situations. Examples are available at <http://www.nationalimmigrationproject.org/VAWA2012/VAWA-U%20Success%20Stories.pdf>. Because these stories may be used in Congressional hearings, please protect your client’s confidentiality accordingly. If you send stories, please cc Paromita Shah, Associate Director of the National Immigration Project at paromita@nationalimmigrationproject.org . The Project continues to collect stories in support of this effort.
5. Save the date on June 26, 2012, the National Day of Action where national and local advocates will be organizing a national action at Capitol Hill and coordinating local actions across the country.