

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is one of the great legislative successes of the past 20 years. Since 1994, when VAWA was signed into law by President Clinton, it has helped millions of women by funding community violence prevention programs and a variety of victim assistance services across the country. VAWA was reauthorized in 2000, and again in 2005 under President Bush. The act received broad, bipartisan support in both of those reauthorizations because of the vital services it provides to women who are victims of domestic or intimate partner violence through no fault of their own.

This year, VAWA is due to be reauthorized again. I strongly support the passage of another robust, inclusive VAWA like the versions we have had in the past. The Senate has passed such a bill with bipartisan support by a vote of 68-31, with 15 Republicans voting in favor. The legislation passed by the Senate strengthens current law to ensure protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning (LGBTQ) victims, and provides recourse for Native American victims assaulted on tribal land by non-tribal perpetrators. It also increases the number of emergency visas available for individuals who immigrate to the US on a marriage or fiancé visa and find themselves in an abusive relationship. I would proudly vote for the Senate version of this bill.

Unfortunately, the version of VAWA brought for a vote by the Majority Republicans in the House of Representatives is the first proposed piece of VAWA legislation to actually roll back rights, rather than increase them. Not only does it not include any of the new provisions in the Senate bill, but it goes so far as to remove current confidentiality protections for victims who still have immigrant status and are attempting to report abuse or assault. It also reduces violence reporting requirements for colleges and universities. I could not, in good conscience, support this bill.

Furthermore, advocacy groups including the Oregon Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, National Organization for Women, National Network to End Domestic Violence, Futures Without Violence, Break the Cycle, and various tribal groups oppose the House version and support the Senate bill.

While VAWA has done an incredible job helping women over the past 18 years, there are still millions of women who are victims of violence in our country. They need a reauthorized VAWA that is more, not less, inclusive. I will continue to work to make sure that the final VAWA that is passed protects all women and does not play politics with their health and safety.