



Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

Office of the Attorney General

Edward Manibusan, Attorney General
2nd Floor Hon. Juan A. Sablan Memorial Bldg.
Caller Box 10007, Capitol Hill
Saipan, MP 96950

For Immediate Release

Contact: Carla Torres
237-7516
carla_torres@cnmioag.org

CNMI Attorney General Supports Reauthorization of the VAWA Funding

Office of the Attorney General, Saipan – In a joint effort organized by the Attorneys General of the 56 states and territories, the National Association of Attorneys General recently urged Congress to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) of which funding is set to expire this year.

“As chief legal officers of our respective states, reducing the rate and devastating effects of sexual violence, intimate partner violence, and stalking and supporting survivors as they rebuild their lives has been a constant and consistent priority,” the Attorneys General state in their letter to Congress. “If Congress allows VAWA to lapse, it will mean that millions of survivors will have nowhere to turn, violent crimes against women will increase and perpetrators of these crimes will go unpunished,” the letter continues.

Originally passed in 1994, VAWA was enacted to address the severity of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking affecting the nation. Between 1995 and 2016, billions of dollars in grants have been awarded to various government and non-profit organizations across the nation. These funds make it possible to provide training, offer victim services, and enhance prosecution efforts. Funding also facilitates programs that foster partnerships between prosecutors, judges, advocates, community organizations, and health care providers to fight against violence against women and support survivors.

“Locally, VAWA funding enables us to continue these efforts and build upon our successes by providing employment opportunities for highly skilled professionals in the Office of the Attorney General,” states Attorney General Manibusan. The AG continues, “At the moment, VAWA funding covers a paralegal, legal assistant, and victim advocates as well as an attorney dedicated solely to the prosecution of cases involving allegations of domestic and sexual violence.”

The CNMI has made great strides to strengthen its laws, advocate for victims, engage leaders and partner agencies, expand educational outreach programs, and strengthen partnerships, yet more efforts are needed. Criminal Division Chief Michele Harris says, “Without the reauthorization to continue VAWA, the Office of the Attorney General will have to seek local funding sources to ensure continued victims services and the successful prosecution of cases involving domestic and sexual violence.”

The CNMI Attorney General is pleased to join with other Attorneys General from the mainland and territories to urge a VAWA reauthorization bill that will ensure our nation’s most vulnerable victims have a voice and receive justice.

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