

legal services through Vera House in Syracuse, New York to help victims of domestic abuse and sexual assault. Vera House provides services for women, children and men, as well as domestic violence prevention programs for the Central New York region. Through my work at Vera House, I have seen how domestic abuse affects people of all ages, races, religions, socio-economic conditions.

Domestic violence is known by many titles: domestic abuse, spousal abuse, family violence, and intimate partner violence. It also takes many forms from physical violence involving such things as hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, or restraining. It can be emotional or verbal abuse which manifests in many types of behavior—controlling, domineering, threatening, or humiliating.

Mr. Speaker, domestic violence is a problem facing every community in America. According to the Centers for Disease Control, domestic violence is a public health problem affecting over 32 million Americans, or 10 percent of the population. The effects of domestic abuse are staggering. Physical abuse can be bruises, broken bones, head injuries, lacerations. But those are just the external physical wounds. Internal bleeding and chronic health conditions such as arthritis, irritable bowel syndrome, ulcers, migraines, and miscarriages can also be linked to physical abuse in abuse victims.

Not only is domestic abuse physically dangerous, it also takes a psychological toll. The damage from this kind of abuse is not limited solely to survivors. It extends to their children, family, and community.

All Americans have a moral obligation to stand up against those who commit violence against women, men, and children. We must be able to both recognize and prevent domestic abuse. We must come together to support survivors of abuse, while providing alternatives to this destructive cycle. As a country, we are equal to the task of fighting domestic abuse and sexual assault if we put our minds and spirits to it.

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RECOGNIZING OCTOBER AS DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

**HON. LOUISE McINTOSH SLAUGHTER**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 25, 2011*

Ms. SLAUGHTER. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month. It is unacceptable that today, in this country, three women and one man will die at the hands of an intimate partner. One in four women will experience some sort of domestic violence in her lifetime. Fifteen and a half million children will witness domestic violence this year. In the face of such overwhelming statistics, it is in our moral fabric as a nation that we act to protect victims of domestic violence in our country.

I am very proud of the progress we have made as a country since the Violence Against Women Act was first signed into law in 1994. VAWA was an historic step forward in our nation's response to sexual assault, domestic violence, stalking, and other forms of violence against women. Thanks to programs estab-

lished by VAWA to respond to the needs of women who had been or could be victimized by violence, women are safer, perpetrators are held accountable, and society is less tolerant of violence against women. Over 60,000 victims of domestic violence receive services every day.

VAWA-funded programs have unquestionably improved the national response to domestic violence. Since VAWA was first passed in 1994:

More victims are coming forward and receiving lifesaving services to help them move from crisis to stability. There has been as much as a 51% increase in reporting by women and a 37% increase in reporting by men.

The number of individuals killed by an intimate partner has decreased by 34% for women and 57% for men and the rate of non-fatal intimate partner violence against women has decreased 53%.

States have passed more than 660 laws to combat domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Staying at a shelter or working with a domestic violence advocate significantly reduces the likelihood that a victim will be abused again and improves the victim's quality of life.

VAWA not only saves lives, it also saves money. In its first six years alone, VAWA saved taxpayers at least \$14.8 billion in net averted social costs.

A recent study found that civil protection orders saved one state (Kentucky) on average \$85 million in a single year.

We have come so far. But we must keep going. Reauthorizations of VAWA have addressed the unique needs of battered immigrants, sexual assault survivors, victims of dating violence, youth, elders, Indian women, individuals with disabilities, and child witnesses of violence. Now, VAWA needs to be reauthorized and updated again to better respond to the needs of women seeking health care treatment from domestic violence.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), intimate partner violence costs the health care system over \$8.3 billion annually. Approximately 37% of women seeking injury-related treatment in hospital emergency rooms were there because of injuries inflicted by a current or former spouse or partner.

VAWA has begun to address this issue—in the past two years, over 3,000 providers from 100 clinical sites serving over 175,000 women have received training through VAWA to integrate assessment for abuse into health care settings. However, more can be done.

These routine assessments need to be expanded so that providers no longer discharge a woman with only the presenting injuries being treated, leaving the underlying cause of those injuries unaddressed.

It is also vital that we focus on researching the most effective interventions to prevent domestic violence, dating violence, and sexual assault, and improve the safety and health of individuals who are victimized. We must understand what makes health care interventions effective, what the factors are that increase resiliency for children exposed to violence and individuals who have lifetime exposure to violence and abuse; and which interventions work best within community health centers and adolescent health settings.

When it comes to domestic violence, it is literally an issue of life or death. Thanks to

strong action by past sessions of Congress, we have helped reduce the prevalence of domestic violence across the United States. Some may say the progress we have made over the years is "good enough." However, "good enough" is neither "good" nor "enough."

Currently, girls and young women between the ages of 16 and 24 are experiencing the highest rate of intimate partner violence, and one in three teens endure some kind of abuse in their romantic relationships. We cannot let our children and young adults face a life of domestic violence. By strengthening federal laws like VAWA, we can continue to help victims of domestic violence and do all that we can to reduce the prevalence of domestic violence in the United States.

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RECOGNITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH/  
WALK A MILE IN HER SHOES INITIATIVE

**HON. SILVESTRE REYES**

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Tuesday, October 25, 2011*

Mr. REYES. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in observance of Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Domestic violence happens all too frequently and affects thousands of Texas families in profound ways. As leaders we must take a more active role in providing targeted assistance to victims of domestic abuse to empower them to overcome abusive relationships.

According to a survey by the Texas Council On Family Violence, TCFV, 74 percent of Texans, including 77 percent of Hispanics, reported that either they, a family member and/or a friend have experienced some form of domestic violence. Additionally, TCFV's survey indicates that nearly two out of every five Hispanic females, 39 percent, in Texas reported personal experience with severe abuse. These revealing statistics clearly show that domestic violence is not a rare occurrence, but a widespread, social ill that must be addressed.

Since the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month in 1987, great strides have been made, resulting in a steady decrease in domestic violence in the last few decades, but much work remains to be done. I have personally remained engaged on this topic and have supported the YWCA El Paso del Norte Region which is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.

In fact, I am proud to note that I am a strong supporter of YWCA's "Walk a Mile in Her Shoes" initiative, which asks men in our community to literally walk a mile in red high heels to promote awareness of sexual violence issues and raise funds for local domestic violence shelters. This is an innovative way to express solidarity with domestic violence victims and those who come to their aid. During this month, let us consider the plight of the thousands of victims of domestic violence in our country, and show our support through actions of awareness and advocacy.