

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

DEADLINE: March 28, 2017

SUPPORT VICTIMS OF CRIME
WITHOUT SPENDING TAX DOLLARS
Help Ensure Increased Outputs from the Crime Victims Fund

Dear Colleague:

Please join us in signing the letter below to Appropriations Committee Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Chairman Culberson, and Ranking Member Serrano to encourage the House Appropriations CJS Subcommittee to set the Crime Victims Fund cap in FY 2018 to at least—\$2.737 billion. This funding level, which is the same as the Committee’s FY 2017 cap, will ensure continued enhanced services to victims of crime throughout the country.

Since 1984, the Victims of Crime Act has provided federal grants to provide essential, often life-saving services for crime victims. The Crime Victims Fund is *not financed by taxpayer dollars* but by fines, forfeitures, and other penalties paid by federal criminal offenders. By statute, the Fund is dedicated solely to supporting victim services. Because these non-tax dollars have already been collected and deposited into the Fund, *raising the cap does not add to the national deficit or debt.*

According to the Department of Justice, during FY 2016, state VOCA victim assistance grants provided vital, direct assistance that supports nearly 7,000 public and community-based agencies nationwide in providing services to almost eight million victims of assault, robbery, gang violence, intoxicated drivers, fraud, elder abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, stalking, and many other crimes. Additionally, VOCA supports victim assistance for those involved in the federal criminal justice system, including survivors of terrorist acts. VOCA also helps victims with financial assistance for medical care, mental health counseling, lost wages, and funeral and burial costs through VOCA victim compensation grants.

In addition to the request that the Crime Victims Fund cap for Fiscal Year 2018 be set at least at the same \$2.737 billion which the subcommittee proposed for Fiscal Year 2017, without any transfers to programs not authorized under the VOCA statute, the letter asks the subcommittee to direct the Department of Justice to make recommendations as to how best to provide the resources to address the victim assistance needs of American Indian crime victims.

If you would like to join us in signing the below letter or if you have any questions, please contact Kristina Solberg in Rep. Jim Costa’s office at kristina.solberg@mail.house.gov or 5-3341 or Kristina Thompson in Rep. Ted Poe’s office at kristina.thompson@mail.house.gov or 5-6565. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

JIM COSTA
Member of Congress

TED POE
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 4, 2017

The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen
Chairman
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
H-305, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Ranking Member
U.S. House Committee on Appropriations
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Culberson
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
H-309, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable José Serrano
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice,
Science, and Related Agencies
1016 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Frelinghuysen, Ranking Member Lowey, Chairman Culberson, and Ranking Member Serrano:

We greatly appreciate your efforts to help crime victims by supporting the Crime Victims Fund and Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) programs. We are enormously grateful for your efforts to support an increased cap on the Crime Victims Fund by agreeing to set the cap at \$2.737 billion for Fiscal Year 2017. Your support represents a historic investment in meeting the crucial needs of victims of all types of crime.

We request that the Crime Victims Fund cap for Fiscal Year 2018 be set at least at the same \$2.737 billion which the subcommittee proposed for Fiscal Year 2017, without any transfers to programs not authorized under the VOCA statute.

We recognize that the rate of violent victimization for both males and females were higher for American Indians than for all other races. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, the rate of violent victimization among American Indians age 25 to 34 was more than 2.5 times the rate for all persons in the same age range. We ask the subcommittee to direct the Department of Justice to make recommendations as to how best provide the resources to address the victim assistance needs of American Indian crime victims.

Deposits into the Fund have continued at an unprecedented rate. Deposits in Fiscal Year 2017 will again exceed the annual cap, even at the amount we are requesting. This means the Fund will continue to be a viable, sustainable, and long-term source to support for VOCA-authorized crime victim services.

As you know, since 1984, the Victims of Crime Act has provided federal grants to provide essential, often lifesaving services for crime victims. The Crime Victims Fund is *not financed by taxpayer dollars* but by fines, forfeitures, and other penalties paid by federal criminal offenders. By statute, the Fund is dedicated solely to supporting victim services. Because these non-tax

dollars have already been collected and deposited into the Fund, obligations from the Fund do not add to the national deficit or debt.

According to the Department of Justice, during FY 2016, state VOCA victim assistance grants provided vital, direct assistance that supports nearly 7,000 public and community-based agencies nationwide in providing services to almost eight million victims of assault, murder, robbery, gang violence, intoxicated drivers, fraud, elder abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, stalking, and many other crimes. Additionally, VOCA supports victim assistance for those involved in the federal criminal justice system, including survivors of terrorist acts. VOCA also helps victims with financial assistance for medical care, mental health counseling, lost wages, and funeral and burial costs through VOCA victim compensation grants.

Maintaining the current funding level for state VOCA assistance grants is essential to responsible and efficient management of victim service programs. Since VOCA funding increased, states have been engaged in long-term planning to best meet victims' needs in their respective jurisdictions by conducting needs assessments, strategic planning, surveys, and discussions with stakeholder groups. As directed by the FY 2015 Explanatory Statement, State VOCA assistance programs have used the increased funding as "catch-up" for "recipients who have long-standing and proven track records of service to their communities." They have also been reaching out to additional programs and victim populations that had not previously received VOCA support, increasing support for victim advocates, and enhancing training and infrastructure and technology improvements. Adopting a policy of setting the annual VOCA cap of at least the average of the last three-year deposits will facilitate continued long-term planning and stability in support of victim services.

We request that the amounts in the Crime Victims Fund be used solely for programs authorized under the VOCA statute. The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2016 used \$389 million from the Crime Victims Fund for non-VOCA authorized programs, thereby undermining the statute's express requirement that the Fund be used solely for VOCA programs, the Fund's long-term viability, and Congress's longstanding commitment to crime victims. We thus continue to support the subcommittee's Fiscal Year 2017 bill which would eliminate the Fiscal Year 2016 transfer of amounts from the Crime Victims Fund to non-VOCA programs.

We again express our great appreciation to the subcommittee for its leadership and ongoing support for important services to crime victims throughout our nation. Your consideration of our request will help ensure the long-term continuity of essential crime victim assistance services.

Sincerely,