

Crime Victims Fund Preservation Act of 2009

S. 1340 and H.R. 3402

S. 1340, introduced by Senators Patrick Leahy and Mike Crapo, and **H.R. 3402**, introduced by Representatives Ted Poe and Jim Costa, are bipartisan companion bills that establish a minimum funding level for VOCA programs for fiscal years through 2014. The minimum VOCA caps in the bills will ensure a reasonable growth in victim programs without jeopardizing the long-term sustainability of the Crime Victims Fund.

The Crime Victims Fund is a special account dedicated solely to supporting services to help crime victims. The money comes *entirely* from fines and other penalties paid by federal criminal offenders, **not from taxpayers**. Until 2000, all amounts deposited into Fund were distributed the following year according to a statutory formula. Because of large fluctuations in Fund deposits, Congress began delaying (capping) annual obligations from the Fund; this resulted in a balance (“rainy day reserve”) being retained in the Fund to ensure stable funding for victim services in future years.

The annual VOCA cap has varied from year to year. Because of VOCA’s allocation formula, grants for state victim assistance programs (that supports more than 4,000 local agencies that provide services to 4 million crime victims every year) are dependent on the size of the cap, and increases in the amount used for other VOCA funded program areas. Because the cap has not kept pace with these costs, funding for state victim assistance grants had been cut by \$87 million (22 percent). During this same period, the Fund balance actually increased from \$1.3 billion to \$2 billion. Fortunately, these cuts were restored by the combination of the 2009 Omnibus Appropriations Act and one-time Recovery Act funds.

Meanwhile, as the Fund’s rainy day reserve continues to grow to unprecedented levels, victim programs’ capacity to provide essential assistance to crime victims has eroded in the face of reduced overall funding and constantly growing unmet needs. According to the U.S. Justice Department, 336,000 fewer crime victims received VOCA assistance services in 2008 than during the previous year. The National Census of Domestic Violence Services

reports that, on one day in 2008, nearly 61,000 adults and children sought support from local domestic violence programs. But on that same day, almost 9000 requests were unmet due to lack of resources.

S. 1340 and H.R. 3402 address these issues by establishing minimum caps on the Fund through fiscal year 2014. In so doing, the bill steadily draws down a portion of the accumulated Fund balance to be used exclusively for victim services as intended by Congress. The total amount to be released will ensure a steady, predictable and manageable growth to meet ongoing crime victims’ needs.

Under the bills, the minimum funding level for 2010 will be \$705 million and then increase by 23 percent through 2014 by amending the VOCA statute (42 U.S.C. 10601) to provide the following minimum cap amounts:

- (a) \$705,000,000 for fiscal year 2010;
- (b) \$867,150,000 for fiscal year 2011;
- (c) \$1,066,594,500 for fiscal year 2012;
- (d) \$1,311,911,235 for fiscal year 2013; and
- (e) \$1,613,650,819 for fiscal year 2014.

These funds will be allocated according to the current VOCA statute to support Children’s Justice Act grants, set-asides for the U.S. Attorneys victim/witness coordinators, FBI victim assistance specialists, federal victim notification system, OVC discretionary grants for training, technical assistance and services for victims of federal crimes, state crime victim compensation grants and state victim assistance grants.

Based on currently known future Fund deposits, it is projected that even with these minimum caps, the Fund will have a balance of at least \$1.3 billion at the end of 2014, thus ensuring the Fund’s sustainability without the need for other revenue sources.

Crime victims continue to desperately need critical services. S. 1340 and H.R. 3402 will help meet these needs, without taxpayer funds, and as Congress intended.