



BIPARTISAN, BICAMERAL GROUP OF MEMBERS OF CONGRESS ANNOUNCE VOCA FIX TO SUSTAIN THE CRIME VICTIMS FUND ACT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 4, 2021
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Washington, D.C. – Today, a bipartisan, bicameral group of Members of Congress announced the introduction of the [VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act](#). This critical piece of legislation will support vital victim service programs by preventing future cuts to already diminished federal victim service grants. Members of Congress in the Senate will introduce the bill today and the House will introduce the bill on Monday.

The legislation is led in the House by House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler (D-NY) and Representatives Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX), Ann Wagner (R-MO), Mary Gay Scanlon (D-PA), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA), Debbie Dingell (D-MI), and John Moolenaar (R-MI). It is led in the Senate by Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, along with Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), John Cornyn (R-TX), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK).

House Judiciary Committee Chairman Jerrold Nadler: “The VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act ensures that programs and services assisting victims of crime are fully funded and better supported. The need for this legislation cannot be understated, as deposits into the Crime Victims Fund have continued to decline, a problem only worsened by the COVID-19 pandemic. I am proud of the bipartisan and bicameral collaboration that has made this piece of legislation possible, and I am hopeful that it will be signed into law.”

Senate Judiciary Chairman Dick Durbin: “Due to the rapidly diminishing balance in the Crime Victims Fund, victim services are already being slashed in states across the country, and some programs and services may see close to a 100 percent cut within two years. In particular, victims in rural and smaller jurisdictions will be impacted by the cuts if Congress does not act. This bipartisan, bicameral legislation to strengthen the Victims of Crime Act will allow many victims a chance to recover and rebuild their lives.”

Senator Lindsey Graham: “The fix in our bill keeps the Fund sustainable and ensures that survivors of child abuse, domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking and other crimes continue to receive the vital services they need both directly and through victim support programs. I am proud to be part of this overdue and much-needed change in policy.”

House Judiciary Subcommittee on Crime Chairwoman Sheila Jackson Lee: “The time is now to deliver access to the services victims and survivors so desperately need during a critical moment when the need for victim assistance has skyrocketed, and programs are being forced to cut lifesaving services for victims.”

Representative Brian Fitzpatrick: “VOCA grants are a major source of federal funding for thousands of vital victim service providers across the nation, including programs that serve victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, trafficking, and drunk driving. Funding for VOCA’s Crime Victims Fund has continued to decline, and this problem has only been further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Our bipartisan, bicameral legislation will fix VOCA funding mechanisms and implement better support for our state victim compensation programs—therefore, providing victims in our communities with the hope and crucial, lifesaving services they need and deserve.”

VOCA grants are the primary source of federal funding for thousands of victim service providers around the country, including programs serving victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, trafficking, and drunk driving. VOCA grants also fund victim compensation, including paying medical bills, covering lost wages, and paying for funeral costs. These critical grants are *not* taxpayer funded. Instead they are paid out of the Crime Victims Fund (CVF), which is funded, in turn, through federal criminal monetary penalties. Over the past several years, deposits into the CVF have dropped, leading to corresponding cuts in grants to victim service providers.

This bill would require DOJ to deposit all monetary penalties, including from deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements, into the CVF.

In addition, The Crime Victims Fund Sustainability Act of 2021 will make much needed improvement to victim compensation and services, including:

- Bolsters state victim compensation funds by increasing the federal grant calculation for funding to victim compensation programs from the current 60% to 75% of state-funded payouts;
- Allows states to request a no-cost extension from the Attorney General, as allowed for other Department of Justice formula grant programs, to ensure states can thoughtfully and effectively distribute victim service grants without being penalized.
- Requires state VOCA Administrators to waive the 20% match requirement for victim service subgrantees for the pendency of the COVID-19 crisis and one additional year;
- Allows state VOCA Administrators to waive subgrantee match requirements at their discretion after the aforementioned waiver expires and require state VOCA Administrators to develop and publish a policy and procedure for obtaining a waiver;
- Instructs the Office for Victims of Crime not to deduct restitution payments recovered by state victim compensation funds when calculating victim compensation awards; and
- Provide flexibility for state compensation programs to waive the requirement to promote victim cooperation with law enforcement if good cause is established by the program.

Support for the VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act:

Representative Debbie Dingell: “Victims and survivors of crimes should not be denied justice because our government has failed to fund critical services and programs. With the Crime Victims Fund Sustainability Act, we can make the urgent reforms necessary to protect VOCA and the people it serves. The cost of inaction is far too great and the pain it will cause is far too painful for the survivors who deserve these supports. It is an honor to join this strong bipartisan, bicameral Congressional effort to fix this long overdue issue.”

Representative Ann Wagner: “The Crime Victims Fund ensures that survivors of serious crimes can access critical services and rebuild their lives. Thousands of Americans, many of whom have suffered domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, human trafficking, and drunk driving, depend on the fund for compensation and lifesaving care. This funding has hit dangerously low levels and victims are in desperate need of our help. This commonsense funding fix will help those at their most vulnerable recover as our justice system prosecutes the criminals responsible.”

Representative Mary Gay Scanlon: “VOCA funds are a critical resource for programs serving victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, trafficking, and drunk driving. I've heard from local organizations that the uncertainty around these funds have made providing life changing services all the more difficult. In response to these calls, I'm proud to join my colleagues in introducing this comprehensive legislation to help our brave survivors.”

Representative John Moolenaar: “This legislation will allow victim advocacy and law enforcement organizations to help those in need with vital services,” said. “By ensuring these organizations continue to have access to federal funding, the VOCA Fix Act will help survivors of violent crime and abuse to access the resources they need.”

Senator Tammy Baldwin: “The Crime Victims Fund ensures that states can provide compensation and assistance to innocent victims of crimes. This lifeline for so many is rapidly running out of funds and we must take action to replenish it, so folks can continue accessing these critical resources. I’m proud to have identified a new revenue source for the Crime Victims Fund – directing funds from deferred and non-prosecution agreements be deposited into the Fund. This innovative solution uses no new taxpayer dollars, and I’m glad to see it incorporated into our bipartisan reform to ensure that victims continue to receive the services and assistance they deserve.”

Senator Chuck Grassley: “For decades, the Crime Victims Fund has provided essential support to Americans across the country – all without spending a dime of taxpayer dollars. However, decreased deposits to the fund from criminal fines and penalties threaten the long-term viability of the fund. I raised concerns about this issue last year. This bipartisan bill addresses funding stream issues to ensure that these resources continue to be available to victims well into the future.”

Senator Dianne Feinstein: “Programs that help victims of crime are severely underfunded due to declining deposits. The necessity for resources has grown worse during the pandemic with the rise in domestic violence. Our bill helps restore this urgently needed funding to ensure that anyone harmed by a crime will receive help recovering.”

Senator Amy Klobuchar: “As a former prosecutor, I’ve seen firsthand the importance of ensuring crime victims across the country – including in our rural communities – have access to the resources they need to get back on their feet. This bipartisan legislation will make necessary changes to the Crime Victims Fund to save critical services and programs that help people rebuild their lives.”

Senator Lisa Murkowski: “This legislation makes substantial improvements to the Victim of Crimes Act and addresses the continuation of decreasing dollars being deposited into the Crimes Victims Fund, which has become unsustainable. I am proud to have worked on a bipartisan solution which will ensure that the VOCA account has the resources necessary to provide vital services for victims and survivors. Providing this fix for VOCA funds will allow the state of Alaska to continue to meet the immediate needs of survivors. I continue to be concerned that the COVID-19 crisis has led to an increase in cases of domestic violence, sexual assault, and child abuse throughout the state. Moving forward, we must continue to strengthen VOCA programs’ abilities to serve survivors and their communities.”

Senator John Cornyn: “For years these programs have brought justice to survivors and victims’ families as they recover from trauma, and we must ensure this funding remains available,” said Sen. Cornyn. “I am proud to join my colleagues to protect this program and remain committed to helping victims in Texas and across the nation get the support they need to rebuild their lives.”

In 2020, all 56 State and Territorial Attorneys General sent a [letter](#) to Congress in support of the deposits fix. The Crime Victims Fund Sustainability Act of 2021 is supported by more than [1,670](#) national, regional, state, territorial, and local organizations, including: the National Children’s Alliance, the National Criminal Justice Association, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the National District Attorneys Association, the National Association of Victim Assistance Administrators, Casa de Esperanza: the National Latin@ Network, the Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, Futures Without Violence, the Council of State Governments Justice Center, the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence, the National Association of Victim Compensation Board Administrators, and the National Network to End Domestic Violence.

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