

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 17, 2009

The Honorable Alan B. Mollohan
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, & Science
U.S. Capitol, Room H-218
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank R. Wolf
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, & Science
U.S. Capitol, Room H-218
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Mollohan and Ranking Member Wolf:

As you begin work on the Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2011, we respectfully request that you raise the cap on spending from the Crime Victims Fund. A growing need for these funds nationwide, coupled with a growing balance in the Fund, compels us to request a 2011 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) cap of at least \$867 million.

The Administration has recommended the FY 2011 cap at \$800 million. While this is an increase of \$95 million *in non-taxpayer funds* over the 2010 cap, the Administration is also proposing new and expanded use of VOCA set asides. These include a new \$100 million OVC discretionary grant program targeted for specific violence against women programs as well as significant expansions of funding for the United States Attorneys' Offices and FBI victim assistance programs. Unfortunately, the Administration's recommended VOCA cap is not enough to offset these additional VOCA spending initiatives and, as a result, state VOCA victim assistance grants—those which fund the majority of VOCA's core programs in every district—could be cut by as much as \$20 million.

As you know, the Crime Victims Fund supports both crime victim compensation, which pays many of the out-of-pocket expenses incurred by victims as a result of crime, and victim assistance programs, which provide victims with support and guidance in the aftermath of crime. More than 4 million victims a year are served by about 4,400 local and state victim service agencies funded by VOCA. VOCA assistance grants support programs that provide critical services to victims of all kinds of crime including victims of assault, robbery, gang violence, intoxicated drivers, fraud, elder abuse, domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, sexual assault, stalking and survivors of homicide, and many others. VOCA also supports victim assistance for those involved in the federal criminal justice system, including survivors of terrorist acts.

Data from the Office for Victims of Crime for the most recently completed grant cycle indicate that more than 20,500 full-time equivalent jobs were paid for with VOCA assistance funds. Most VOCA-funded advocates working in non-profit agencies earn minimal salaries that typically range from \$25,000 to \$30,000 (with some as low as \$9,600). The ability to recruit and retain trained advocates is essential to maintaining quality services for crime victims, particularly given that nowadays advocates

Chairman Mollohan and Ranking Member Wolf

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and counselors typically work beyond capacity to meet the needs of victims and survivors. Raising the cap will translate directly into more jobs.

Congress created the Crime Victims Fund as part of the VOCA to use fines, forfeitures, and other penalties on federal criminal offenders—not taxpayer dollars—to support our national response to crime victims. Since 2000, disbursements from the Fund have been capped creating a balance to ensure that sufficient funds are available in future years.

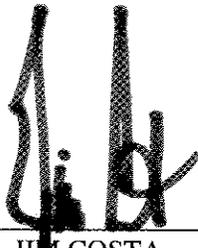
We greatly appreciate your efforts to support the vital resources necessary to help address the dire needs of crime victims in our Nation. Thanks to improvements your Committee made in 2009 and 2010, funding for state VOCA victim assistance programs have been restored to the same level they were funded in 2006, including inflation.

Meanwhile, the need for critical victim assistance services continues to grow. The National Crime Victims Helpline saw a 25 percent increase in calls. The National Domestic Violence Hotline reports a similar increase in calls, many of which are tied to recent financial stress. Local shelters and crisis lines are also reporting increased demand. The most recent census by the National Network to End Domestic Violence reports that 8,927 requests for services on one day in 2008 went unmet. The census noted that “many programs reported a critical shortage of funds and staff to fully assist victims in need of services such as transportation, childcare, language translation, mental health and substance abuse counseling, and legal representation.”

Recent years have seen an unprecedented increase in deposits into the Crime Victims Fund. According to OMB’s budget estimates, the 2011 opening balance in the Fund will be \$4.3 billion with an additional \$1 billion to be deposited into the Fund during the year. This means that \$5.3 billion will be available for VOCA programs during the year which is more than enough non-taxpayer funds to help address the increasing need for additional assistance services without jeopardizing the Fund’s long-term sustainability.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Committee to raise the 2011 VOCA cap to at least \$867 million. This funding level that will provide state VOCA victim assistance grants a modest 3.5 percent increase to begin addressing the growing need for more victim assistance services without jeopardizing the Fund’s stability

Thank you for your leadership in this critical area and for your consideration of this request.

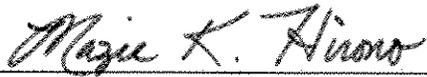


JIM COSTA
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Sincerely,



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DENNIS MOORE
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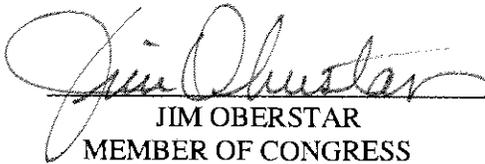
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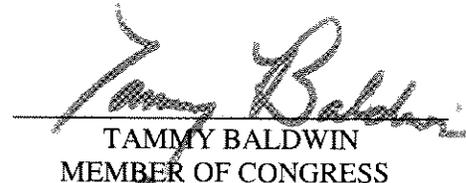
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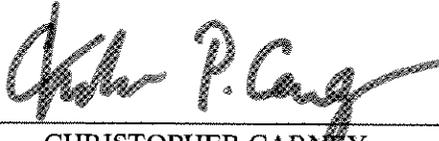
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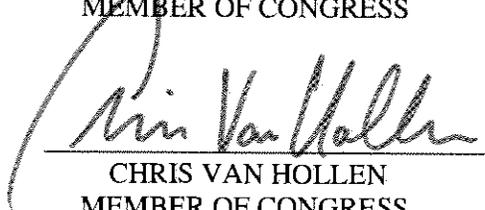
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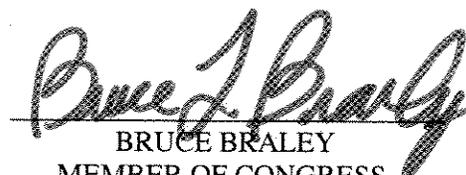
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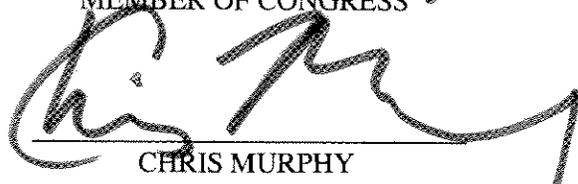
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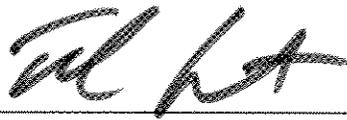
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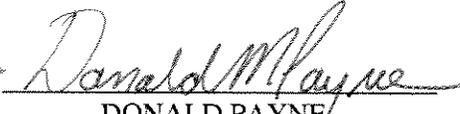
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