

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 19, 2011

The Honorable Frank Wolf
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice &
Science
Longworth House Office Building H-310
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chaka Fattah
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice &
Science
The Capitol 1016
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Wolf and Ranking Member Fattah:

As you work on the FY 2012 appropriations bill, we respectfully request that you increase the VOCA cap on spending from the Crime Victims Fund to \$1 billion.

Since 1984, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) 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.

Every year, State VOCA victim assistance grants provide vital direct assistance that supports more than 4,000 agencies nationwide in providing services to 3.5 million to 4 million 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. Each year's grants supports create or retain for more than 20,000 full-time equivalent jobs (at an average cost of less than \$20,000 each).

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.

Although the balance in the Fund continues to grow, the release of these dedicated funds has not kept pace with the need for victim assistance and compensation. During the several years, victim service professionals have seen a clear increase in victimization and victim need, as job losses and economic stress often translate into increased violence in the home and in our communities.

- State VOCA victim assistance grants were cut by \$87 million (22 percent) between 2006 and 2008. Because of the reduced funding, 589,912 *fewer* crime victims received VOCA-funded services. Although Congress began restoring these cuts, state assistance grants in 2011 are about 11 percent *less* in real dollars than in 2006.

- During 2010, domestic violence programs laid off or did not replace over 2,000 staff positions; at least 77% reported funding cuts while 82% reported an increase in demand for services. Many programs are eliminating services such as individual counseling or childcare.
- According to a 2010 National Alliance to End Sexual Violence (NAESV) survey, 25% of rape crisis centers have waiting lists; funding and staffing cuts meant a 50% overall reduction in advocacy services.

The economic downturn has resulted in limits on state government funding and significant decreases in private giving. With the increased need for funding, and the ample balance in the Fund, now is the time to raise the cap on the Crime Victims Fund and release additional money for the purpose for which it was collected.

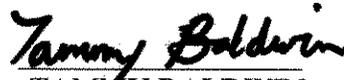
We are asking for a 2012 VOCA cap of \$1 billion to support core VOCA assistance programs. OMB projects that the Crime Victims Fund opening balance in 2012 will be \$5.8 billion, which is more than enough to provide this funding level without jeopardizing the Fund's future sustainability.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Committee to raise the 2012 VOCA cap to at least \$1 billion to help continue meeting the dire needs of victims of all types of crime throughout the nation. Thank you for your leadership and consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



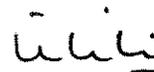
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Member of Congress



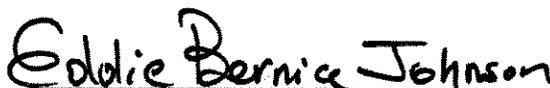
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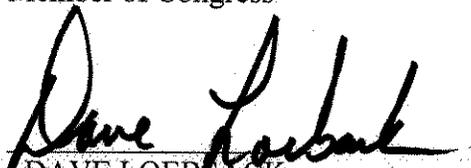

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