

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Dear Colleague:

We invite you in joining us in signing the attached letter to Chairman Mikulski and Ranking Member Hutchison to encourage the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice and Science to raise the cap on the Crime Victims Fund (“The Fund”).

Since 1984, the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) has provided federal grants to provide essential, often life-saving services for crime victims. The Fund, which is not financed by taxpayer dollars, but by fines, forfeitures, and other penalties paid by federal criminal offenders, plays a vital role in aiding more than 4,400 agencies nationwide in providing services to 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. 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.

In recent years, the balance of the Fund has consistently increased. The Office of Management and Budget projects that the Fund will grow by \$1.6 billion this year alone. Thus, there is more than enough money in the Fund – which is dedicated solely to supporting victim programs – to ensure that VOCA assistance grants can continue to support vital services.

While the Fund’s balance is growing, so is the need for victim assistance and compensation. During the past year, victim service professionals have seen a clear increase in victimization and victim need, as job losses and economic stress can translate into increased violence in the home and in our communities. 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 ask you to join us in requesting a 2012 VOCA cap of \$1 billion to support core VOCA assistance programs and fulfill the needs of victims across the country. The balance in the Crime Victims Fund is more than enough to provide this funding level without jeopardizing the Fund’s future sustainability.

If you would like to join us in signing this letter or have any questions, please contact Kelsey Kobelt with Senator Leahy at 4-7703 or Molly Giammarco with Senator Crapo at 4-6142 by May 18. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,


PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator


MIKE CRAPO
United States Senator

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski, Chairwoman
The Honorable Kay Bailey Hutchinson, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, and Science
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Mikulski and Ranking Member Hutchison:

As you begin work on the Commerce, Justice and Science appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2012, we respectfully request that you increase the cap on spending from the Crime Victims Fund (“The Fund”). Due to a growing need for these funds nationwide, coupled with a growing balance in the Fund, we request a 2012 Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) cap of at least \$1 billion.

Since its enactment more than 25 years ago, 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 4,400 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 support, create, or retain 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.

While the Fund’s balance is growing, so is the need for victim assistance and compensation. During the past 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.

The Honorable Barbara Mikulski
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- The National Network to End Domestic Violence's 2010 census found that 70,648 crime victims were served a single day but **9,541** requests for services went **unmet** that day due to inadequate funding and resources. *Although the number of adults and children served increased by 22 percent since 2006, the number of unmet requests increased by 85 percent — showing that the need for services has greatly outpaced the capacity to provide those services.*
- During 2010, domestic violence programs laid off or did not replace more than 2,000 staff positions; at least 77 percent of these programs reported funding cuts, while 82 percent 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 survey, 25 percent of rape crisis centers have waiting lists; funding and staffing cuts meant a 50 percent 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.

The balance in the Crime Victims Fund is more than enough to provide a significantly increased funding level without jeopardizing the Fund's future sustainability. Accordingly, 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 in this critical area and for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,