

Prepared Statement by Senator Chuck Grassley of Iowa
Chairman, Senate Judiciary Committee
Hearing: "The Need to Reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act"
March 20, 2018

I want to welcome everyone to our hearing on the need to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, or VAWA. I supported the enactment of the original Violence Against Women Act and have voted to reauthorize the grant programs authorized under this law on more than one occasion.

As chairman of this committee, I've also made it a top priority to advance other measures to expand victims' rights. In 2016, for example, I worked closely with one of our witnesses, Amanda Nguyen, on a landmark measure to help rape survivors. Last year, I sponsored and our committee approved a measure to renew and update the Trafficking Victims Protection Act. Also in 2017, our committee cleared a measure to make more resources available to victims of child pornography as well as legislation to protect young athletes from sexual abuse.

Renewing and extending the Violence Against Women Act is our next priority. That's why we've convened today's hearing. We'll hear from some outstanding experts on this subject, including the head of the Justice Department's Office on Violence Against Women, as well as an experienced prosecutor and several accomplished advocates.

Before we begin, I want to take this opportunity to recognize the Elder Justice Coalition on this, its 15th anniversary. The Coalition, its staff, and its National Coordinator Bob Blancato, who are in the audience, have been an important national voice in elder abuse prevention. Elder abuse can take many forms, and research suggests that it disproportionately affects women.

I appreciated the Coalition's strong support of my Elder Abuse Prevention and Prosecution Act. Knowing of the Coalition's long support of VAWA, I also look forward to hearing its input as well as the input of many other advocates here with us today in the audience.

I will close by mentioning that we're currently writing legislation to update and extend VAWA, which was last reauthorized in 2013. Among other provisions, this measure will extend the Justice Department's DNA backlog reduction program, while ensuring that rape victims are the top priority under this program. I'm troubled by a reported explosion in unanalyzed sexual assault evidence, which has occurred at the same time that Congress has devoted more than a billion dollars to DNA backlog reduction.

The measure we're writing also will extend funding for key programs, such as STOP grants and transitional housing, which are the centerpiece of VAWA.

I would like to thank Ranking Member Feinstein for sharing my commitment to moving a bipartisan reauthorization bill. I'd also like to thank all the witnesses for attending today and for sharing their experiences with us.