

Statement of  
**The Honorable Christopher A. Coons**

United States Senator  
United States Senate  
July 13, 2011

Hearing of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary on  
"The Violence Against Women Act: Building on Seventeen Years of Accomplishments"  
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Mr. Chairman, nearly 17 years after its original passage, it's hard to imagine America without the Violence Against Women Act and the remarkable impact it has had on the safety of women across our country.

As a Delawarean, I am proud of my state's long tradition of support for the Violence Against Women Act. When then-Senator Biden first introduced VAWA in 1990, he was among the first in the Senate to recognize that domestic violence was a national issue that demanded a national response. By the time Congress passed VAWA in 1994, Joe Biden's leadership had helped to change the way all Americans view violence against women.

VAWA funding supports critical victims services throughout the country. As we will hear from the witnesses today, VAWA supports rape crisis centers and transitional housing programs for women at risk. VAWA supports women's safety on college campuses, in rural areas, and on tribal lands. VAWA programs target aid to vulnerable populations, such as children and youth, the elderly, and culturally- or linguistically-isolated groups. Domestic violence so often occurs in the home, where misplaced loyalties and stigma can render it so difficult to identify. Through the STOP program, VAWA trains and provides capacity for law enforcement to detect, stop and prosecute domestic violence. In my home state of Delaware, VAWA provided almost \$5 million last year in critically needed funding to support community programs for victims of domestic violence.

And the evidence shows that VAWA is working: reports of rape are down since VAWA was passed, even as the percentages of rapes that are reported have risen. Domestic violence resulting in death is down more than 20 percent.

Without Congressional action, many of VAWA's programs will expire this year and as a human rights issue, we simply cannot allow that to happen. To those who claim that we cannot afford VAWA in these tough budgetary times, I would say that we cannot afford not to.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for calling this hearing and I look forward to working with you to reauthorize VAWA.