



*The Office of Congressman John Lewis representing the 5<sup>th</sup>  
Congressional District of Georgia*

## **THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT REAUTHORIZATION FACTSHEET**

Last October during Domestic Violence Awareness Month, Congressman Lewis urged action on the Violence Against Women Act and the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act. These landmark, bipartisan bills have always featured wide, bipartisan support.

On February 28, 2013, the House responded to the call to action by adopting the bipartisan Senate bill, S.47, which reauthorizes both important pieces of legislation.

The Senate passed S. 47 by a vote of 78-22; today the House passed the identical bill by a vote of 296-183. This critical legislation is en route to the President to be signed into law.

### **S.47 includes the SMART Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Act**

Since 1994, Congressman Lewis has been a strong supporter of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Following a disturbing conversation with Fulton County District Attorney Paul Howard, the Congressman became the House leader on teen dating violence prevention.

Congressman Lewis' bill, the **SMART Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Act** is included in the bill adopted by the House and Senate on February 28, 2013 – the last day of Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Month.

In recent years, there has been a shocking increase in abusive youth relationships in Metro Atlanta and across the nation. In addition to sponsoring an annual resolution and congressional briefing recognizing Teen Dating Violence Awareness and Prevention Month in February, the Congressman introduced legislation – the SMART Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Act -- to focus on this alarming trend. Every year Congressman Lewis also co-hosts an annual bipartisan, bicameral congressional briefing on the importance of teen dating violence prevention.

The most recent version of this legislation, the SMART Teen Dating Violence Prevention and Awareness Act, was included in the broader bipartisan Senate and House Republican VAWA reauthorization proposals.

### **Background on VAWA**

A critical part of the VAWA reauthorization process is to look for gaps in the system and adjust the national plan accordingly. While VAWA has been successful in reducing cases of domestic abuse in most adult relationships, youth, GLBT, immigrant, and Native American communities

continue to need increased, updated legal protections. The most recent bill, S. 47, does just that.

Since 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) has provided a national roadmap to combating domestic violence and sexual assault in every corner of our nation.

On May 14, 2012, Congressman Lewis joined Reps. Mike Quigley (D-IL) and David Reichert (R-WA) in hosting a congressional briefing on Engaging Men in Violence Prevention. This briefing discussed how to include males of all ages, both victims and potential abusers, in both prevention and treatment strategies.

Originally signed into law in 1994, this landmark legislation was updated in 2000 and in 2005 with strong, bipartisan support. VAWA provides a clear, national plan to prevent and protect domestic and sexual violence against women, men, and children.

For almost two decades, this legislation has led to the successful reduction of domestic abuse and the prosecution of perpetrators. The reauthorization effort has always been a bipartisan, reflective process to adapt the law to improve preventing, protecting, and prosecuting domestic violence and sexual assault cases.

#### **S.47 includes TVPRA**

The most recent VAWA bill overcame significant hurdles to pass Congress. This legislation also includes the reauthorization of the William Wilberforce Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA) until 2017.

As a major transportation and business center, Atlanta was identified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a national human trafficking hub with some of the highest rates of child prostitution, commercial sexual exploitation, and human trafficking.

Human trafficking is one of the most prolific areas of international criminal activity and one of the greatest human rights tragedies of our age. In fact, there are more individuals living in forced labor today than during the entire period of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Of the present-day victims, the overwhelming majority are women and children who are forced into sexual slavery, labor, marriage, and service as child soldiers.

TVPRA provides a national roadmap for government agencies, law enforcement, and service providers to combat human trafficking throughout the United States and around the world.