

**International Violence
Against Women Act (IVAWA)**

ACTION TOOLKIT

SUMMER 2010

TAKE ACTION for the International Violence Against Women Act!

Dear Friends,

Thank you for taking action to support the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA)! In this Action Kit, you will find background information and talking points on the I-VAWA, ways that you can take action no matter how much or little time you have available to you, and sample materials to get you started.

IVAWA has growing support in the House and the Senate. It also has the support of strong Congressional champions who are committed to passing the bill this year – but we need to keep IVAWA on the crowded political agenda, make it a priority for the United States Congress and secure votes in support of this important legislation. AN ACTIVIST PUSH IN JULY IS CRITICAL!

Many of you have taken action on IVAWA in the past by visiting your members of Congress, sending letters, making calls and demonstrating support amongst constituents for ending violence against women globally. Just one phenomenal example is AIUSA Group 23's work in Houston. They developed a letter thanking lead Republican co-sponsor Representative Ted Poe for his leadership and secured the signatures of 21 Houston based women's organizations and domestic violence shelters (its included in this packet in case you would like to replicate that effort in your district). **Don't forget it is critical that we thank members of Congress who have cosponsored IVAWA and that we continue to urge those who haven't cosponsored yet to support the bill!**

Please take some time to go through the kit and decide which actions you would like to take. If you have any questions that are not addressed in the kit, please do not hesitate to contact the IVAWA team by emailing djayasinghe@aiusa.org. Please note this action kit is also available on our website at www.aiusa.org/ivawa.

Thanks to Amnesty activists' pressure, we got IVAWA reintroduced this Congress, now lets pass it this Congress as well! Thank you for taking the time to support the International Violence Against Women Act.

Yours sincerely

Amnesty International USA

Family Violence Prevention Fund

Women Thrive Worldwide

Background on the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA)

- Every year, violence devastates the lives of millions of women and girls. Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation occurring globally. It includes rape, domestic violence, women being beaten and killed by their husbands, human trafficking and more.
- At least one in every three women globally has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Violence destabilizes countries, impedes economic progress, and prevents women from raising healthy children.
- The International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) creates a comprehensive, integrated approach to addressing violence and places women at the center of U.S. foreign policy. The bill supports measures to prevent violence, protect survivors and bring perpetrators to justice. It contains best practice provisions for preventing and responding to violence against women during times of peace and times of conflict.
- The bill was introduced in the House and Senate during the 110th Congress and received bipartisan support.
- In February 2010, a bipartisan team of Senators John Kerry (D-Mass.), Barbara Boxer (D-Calif.), Susan Collins (R-Maine) and Olympia Snowe (R-Maine) and Representatives Bill Delahunt (D-Mass.) and Ted Poe (R-Texas) re-introduced I-VAWA in the 111th Congress.

Specifically, I-VAWA would:

- Address violence against women and girls comprehensively, by supporting health, legal, economic, social, and humanitarian assistance sectors and incorporating violence prevention and response best practices into such programs.
- Alleviate poverty and increase the cost effectiveness of foreign assistance by investing in women.
- Define a clear mandate for Senior Officials in the Department of State and USAID for leadership, accountability and coordination in preventing and responding to violence against women and girls.
- Enable the U.S. government to develop a faster and more efficient response to violence against women in humanitarian emergencies and conflict-related situations.
- Build the effectiveness of overseas non-governmental organizations – particularly women’s non-governmental organizations – in addressing violence against women.

What can I do to take action?

There are many ways you can take part in this action, depending on how much time, resources, and people you have. No action is too small!

- **Take action online.** Click here [IVAWA online action](#) for a link to email your member of Congress, urging them to co-sponsor the I-VAWA and thanking those who have already co-sponsored!
- **Write an opinion editorial, letter to the editor or blog post** about the I-VAWA. Samples are included in this packet.
- **Organize a call-in or letter writing campaign.** Get your friends and relatives to flood the voicemail or mailbox of your member of Congress. Urge them to cosponsor the bill and support it when it comes to the floor. Is your member of Congress already an IVAWA cosponsor? [Click here to see an up to date list of cosponsors](#). If your member of Congress is a cosponsor write and thank them for the support. Sample 'please co-sponsor' and 'thank you' letter templates are included in this packet.

Note: to find out who your member of Congress is, go to <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/officials/>

Organizing a Call-in and/or Letter-writing Event

What to do:

- You can do these activities during your regular group meeting, or you can create a separate event, or both, depending on your capacity.
- If you are doing it during your regular group meeting, take at least 10 minutes during the meeting and ask people to make phone calls and write letters to their member of Congress.
- If possible, you should do this in the middle of the event or meeting when you have everyone's attention rather than waiting until the end.
- Provide activists with a script for making phone calls and a sample letter they can follow. We have included a sample script and letter in this Action Kit. Make copies for everyone at your meeting, or for the number of people you estimate will attend your event. You can all call at the same time.

Notes:

- If you are making phone calls, do not expect to speak directly to your member of Congress. You will probably be connected with one of their staff members. Leave a message with them as every constituent request **MUST** be taken into account: your message will be passed on to your member of Congress and **WILL** make an impact!
- If you are writing letters, address them directly to your member of Congress.

Sample Please co-sponsor I-VAWA letter

The Honorable [REDACTED]

[Insert the District Office Address of your member of Congress here – find it at <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/officials/>]

Dear Representative/Senator (last name),

I am writing to urge you to co-sponsor the International Violence Against Women Act (H.R. 4594/S. 2982) and support the bill when it comes to the floor.

Approximately one out of every three women globally has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime. Rates of domestic violence are up to 70 percent in some countries. Every day a woman is raped, beaten by her husband or forced to trade sex for food. All too often these violent crimes are not prosecuted and worse still, they become socially accepted and tolerated. Violence against women is a global health crisis and human rights violation that contributes to instability and insecurity throughout our world.

Support from the American public is strong. A 2009 poll found that 61 percent of voters across demographic and political lines thought global violence against women should be one of the top international priorities for the U.S. government, and 82 percent supported the I-VAWA legislation when it was explained to them.

I am asking you, as my Representative/Senator, to co-sponsor the International Violence Against Women Act and take action to end the abuse.

The International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) supports innovative programs which have been shown to effectively decrease acts of violence. Many of these programs help women and girls do things we so often take for granted; go to school, earn an income to take care of their families, collect food or water without fear of rape and bring perpetrators of abuse to justice. I-VAWA will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of existing US foreign policy to end violence against women and enhance our ability to stop the suffering.

In a world where tensions and violence within communities can jeopardize national and international security, it is critical that the United States takes action to end atrocities committed against women and girls in their homes and in their communities, during times of peace and times of conflict.

The International Violence Against Women Act provides the United States with an opportunity to effectively address this problem and stop the violence around the world. When implemented, this important piece of legislation will put an end to the fear, pain and suffering experienced by countless women and girls globally.

Please make a difference in the lives of millions of women and girls - co-sponsor this important bill and support it when it comes to the floor.

Yours sincerely,

(Your name and address)Or ask other group members and constituents to add their names and address to one letter.****

Sample thank you for co-sponsoring I-VAWA letter

The Honorable [redacted]

[Insert the District Office Address of your member of Congress here – find it at

<http://www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/officials/>]

Dear (insert Representative/Senator's name),

I am writing to thank you for demonstrating your commitment to ending abuses against women and girls globally by co-sponsoring the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) **(H.R. 4594/S. 2982)**

When implemented, this important piece of legislation will put an end to the fear, pain and suffering experienced by countless women and girls all around the world. Every day a woman is raped, beaten by her husband or forced to trade sex for food. All too often these violent crimes are not prosecuted and, worse still, they become socially accepted and tolerated. **Thank you for taking a stand by co-sponsoring a bill that will show the world that the United States refuses to tolerate violence against women anywhere.**

As you know, the International Violence Against Women Act supports innovative programs to help victims, hold perpetrators accountable, and prevent violence. We are grateful to you for supporting such this comprehensive piece of legislation that will have a significant impact on ending the tyranny of abuse and stopping a human rights violation that occurs globally. Thank you for taking action. We look forward to your continued support when the bill comes to the floor.

Yours sincerely,

(Your name and address)Or ask other group members and constituents to add their names and address to one letter.****

Sample Opinion Editorial

Help Stop Violence Against Women Worldwide

By [Your Name, Organization]

Each day, women and girls are raped, beaten, burned, trafficked and subjected to other forms of horrendous violence. Approximately one out of three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime, and in some countries rates of domestic violence are as high as 70%. No country is immune – the violence crosses all borders and affects women of all ages, social groups, religions and classes.

The United States Congress now has an opportunity to address these horrifying abuses. Senators Kerry (D-MA) Boxer (D-MA), Snowe (R-ME) and Collins (R-ME) and Representatives Delahunt (D-MA) and Poe (R-TX) have introduced the International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA), a comprehensive piece of legislation which will integrate violence prevention in US foreign policy.

I-VAWA is desperately needed and long overdue. Congress should move quickly to make it law.

The International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) will support innovative programs which have been shown to effectively reduce acts of violence. These include programs which create economic and educational opportunities for women, challenge public attitudes that permit violence, improve health services for survivors and bring perpetrators of violence to justice.

Working through the international assistance that the U.S. already provides, this new bipartisan bill will support best practices to combat violence aimed at women and girls. It would expand our government's ability to prevent violence against women caught in conflict, support non-governmental organizations that are combating violence on the ground, and put the U.S. unequivocally on the record with countries around the world in saying that ending violence against women and girls is a national priority.

I-VAWA is especially important because it incorporates training, protection, and services for women across a range of situations, from the fight against HIV-AIDS, to schools and health clinics, to court systems, to refugee camps. It also emphasizes long-term prevention efforts like increasing women's economic security and expanding access to good jobs.

In a world where tensions and violence within communities can jeopardize national and international security, it is critical that the United States takes action to end atrocities committed against women and girls in their homes and in their communities, during times of peace and times of conflict.

Violence takes the lives of millions of women and girls, and denies countless others their dignity and chance to live safe, productive lives. I urge Representative/Senator [redacted] to take action today and become a cosponsor of the International Violence Against Women Act [or, if your member of Congress is a co-sponsor] I applaud Representative/Senator [redacted] for demonstrating his/her commitment to ending violence against women by co-sponsoring the International Violence Against Women Act.

Add a one-sentence description of the author.

Sample Letter to the Editor on I-VAWA

To the Editor:

Every day around the world a war is waged against women and girls, taking millions of lives and causing terrible suffering. Violence against women includes abuse by spouses or partners in the home, rape as a weapon during wartime, so-called honor killings and forced prostitution. Approximately one out of every three women globally has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime. In some countries, rates of domestic violence are as high as 70 percent. The distress and injuries caused affect families, communities and wider societies, preventing women from taking full advantage of economic and educational opportunities and threatening security by increasing social tensions. Violence against women is a global health crisis, a human rights violation and a moral outrage.

Now, the United States is poised to make a difference to stop the violence. members of Congress from both parties have introduced legislation that will enhance our ability to address violence against women and girls overseas. The International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA) will support innovative programs that have been shown to be effective in reducing acts of violence. These include programs that create economic and educational opportunities for women, challenge public attitudes that permit violence, improve health services for survivors and bring perpetrators of violence to justice. Members of Congress now have the opportunity to stop the violence by co-sponsoring this important bill. I hope that Representative/Senator [redacted] will cosponsor the International Violence Against Women Act today [or, if your member of Congress is a co-sponsor] I applaud Representative/Senator [redacted] for demonstrating his/her commitment to ending violence against women by co-sponsoring the International Violence Against Women Act.

Name

Address and phone numbers

Sample Blog Post

Help Stop Violence Against Women Worldwide

By **[Your Name, Organization]**

It's official! Members of Congress have introduced the groundbreaking International Violence Against Women Act (I-VAWA)!

I-VAWA, which was introduced in the House and Senate last Congress, presents a critical opportunity for the United States to protect, defend, and empower the world's women. It is a comprehensive piece of legislation that will integrate violence prevention in U.S. foreign policy and support innovative programs that have been shown to effectively reduce violence against women and girls.

For many of us, recent reports on international violence against women seem distant and incomprehensible. On any given day, horrifying stories on such violence appear in the news: the systematic rape of women in the Democratic Republic of Congo, increasing assaults on women and girls in Afghanistan, violence against women and girls in Haiti whose lives are already devastated by the earthquake. Sadly, this violence is not isolated to a few women in a few places. In fact, approximately one out of three women worldwide has been beaten, coerced into sex or otherwise abused in her lifetime with rates of domestic violence reaching 70 percent in some countries. No country is immune – the violence crosses all borders and affects women of all ages, social groups, religions and classes.

The United States Congress now has an opportunity to address these horrifying abuses. Senators Kerry (D-MA), Boxer (D-CA), Collins (R-ME) and Snowe (R-ME) and Congressman Delahunt (D-MA) and Congressman Poe (R-TX) introduced the International Violence Against Women Act, landmark legislation that can have a real impact for women all over the world.

Congress should move quickly to make the I-VAWA into law.

In a world where tensions and violence within communities can jeopardize national and international security, it is critical that the United States take action to end atrocities committed against women and girls in their homes and in their communities, during times of peace and times of conflict.

Violence takes the lives of millions of women and girls, and denies countless others their dignity and the chance to live safe, productive lives. Constituents now have the opportunity to let lawmakers know they want more to be done to address violence against women globally, they can take action to end the suffering by urging their members of Congress to co-sponsor I-VAWA. Click here [IVAWA online action](#) for a link to email your member of Congress, urging them to co-sponsor the I-VAWA and thanking those who have already co-sponsored!

[Add a one-sentence description of the author.]

Sample Telephone Script

Find out the number of your member of Congress at <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/dbq/officials/>

- 1.) Telephone calls are usually taken by a staff member. Ask to speak with the aide who handles women's issues or foreign affairs issues.
- 2.) After identifying yourself as a constituent, tell the staffer that you would like to leave a brief message.

"Please tell Representative/Senator [REDACTED] that I support the International Violence Against Women Act."

- 3.) Ask for the position of your member of Congress on the bill. If they are a co-sponsor thank them for their support and urge them to support the bill when it comes to the floor.
- 4.) If not leave a message saying:

"Please urge the member of Congress to cosponsor the bill and support it when it comes to the floor."

- 5.) And add:

"I support the bill because:

- **Violence against women and girls is a human rights violation occurring globally.**
- **At least one in every three women globally has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime.**
- **The International Violence Against Women Act supports measures to prevent violence, protect survivors and bring perpetrators to justice.**

You may request a written response to your telephone call.