



Utah Domestic Violence Council

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Judy Kasten Bell, Executive Director

## UDVC Applauds Hatch on Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization

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### For Immediate Release:

The Utah Domestic Violence Council (UDVC) applauds the ongoing support and representation Sen. Orrin Hatch provides to Utah through his continuing commitment to the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Senators Hatch, Joseph Biden (D–DE), and Arlen Specter (R–PA) recently introduced legislation to reauthorize VAWA. The VAWA legislation seeks to improve criminal justice and community-based responses to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. It was initially passed and signed into law by former President Bill Clinton in 1994 and reauthorized the first time in 2000.

“VAWA is critical to the work that many Utah-based organizations that serve victims of domestic violence do,” said UDVC Chair Brandy Farmer. “The Act provides funding for many victim advocate programs, shelters, law enforcement programs, and legal services. In return, those organizations provide a tremendous number of Utah families living with violence in the home with the support they need to get safe and stop the violence.”

The work of ending domestic violence remains paramount to Utah’s domestic violence advocacy organizations and agencies. Between July 2003 and June 2004, Utah’s 16 domestic violence shelters served 5,471 victims of violence, more than half of whom were children. Additionally, nearly 1,600 victims were turned away and referred to other communities because the shelters were full. During the same time period, the Division of Child and Family Services had 2,656 referrals for domestic violence-related child abuse.

The Domestic Violence Information LINK Line referred an average of six callers each day to domestic violence resources in the state. Tragically, 14 victims were murdered in 2004 by their alleged abusers.

“VAWA enables these programs to continue to provide the excellent service to victims of domestic violence,” said UDVC Executive Director Judy Kasten Bell. “The reauthorization of the Act helps ensure that they will be able to continue to provide these levels of service to victims of domestic violence in the future.”

Furthermore, according to Farmer, the reauthorized Act extends some services VAWA has supported in the past.

"I am elated to discover that the Act has been expanded to provide services to both adult and youth victims in the areas of domestic violence," she said. "In the past VAWA was written to address adult victims of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking. The reauthorized Act also adds an amendment to ensure that all legal services organizations that receive funding can assist any victim of DV, sexual assault or trafficking without regard to the victim's immigration status."

New additions to the 2005 VAWA include:

- Creating new programs to educate the courts and court-related personnel in the area of domestic violence.
- Creating new and desperately needed protections and "best practices" for victim information collected by federal agencies and prohibiting grantees from disclosing victims' information, ensuring victim confidentiality and safety.
- Clarifying full faith and credit of protective orders for both adult and youth victims.
- Expanding transitional housing.
- Adding entitlement to emergency leave to address domestic violence and to help victims maintain secure employment.

If you or someone you know needs more information about domestic violence, call the Utah Domestic Violence LINK Line at (800) 897-LINK (5465). For more information about the Utah Domestic Violence Council call Judy Kasten Bell, Executive Director, at (801) 521-5544 or Brandy Farmer, Chair, at (801) 281-1259.