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Murkowski and Colleagues Introduce Bipartisan Bill to Reauthorize Violence Against Women Act

Works to Prevent Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assaults & Stalking

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), alongside U.S. Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Joni Ernst (R-IA), and Dick Durbin (D-IL), introduced the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Reauthorization Act of 2022. This bipartisan legislation reauthorizes the VAWA federal grant programs through 2027 and modernizes the almost three-decade old law. This legislation will help prevent violence, support survivors, and hold perpetrators accountable for their violent actions. It includes key provisions to enhance tools to prevent domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking while improving access to essential support services such as healthcare and safe housing for all victims.

[Click here](#) for a section by section of the bill.

[Click here](#) for bill text.



Click [HERE](#) to watch Senator Murkowski's remarks at a press conference on the bill introduction. Murkowski and her colleagues were joined by advocate Angelina Jolie, representatives from violence prevention and law enforcement groups, and a survivor of domestic violence.

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The compromise package includes Senator Murkowski's Alaska tribal public safety empowerment pilot program, which is aimed at addressing the public safety crisis in Alaska Native Villages. It also includes important provisions to combat teen violence, protect women at risk of lethal abuse at the hands of convicted domestic violence offenders, improves access to trauma-informed care for all victims of violence, and expands access to medical forensic exams for survivors of sexual assault.

“In Alaska, we know we must do a better job when it comes to protecting women. The provisions in this reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act will not only address countless barriers survivors experience in seeking justice, but will also save lives. This bipartisan legislation works to empower victims, bolster supportive services to those who have been victims of violence, strengthen law enforcement, and improve existing statutes to close loopholes, and correct injustices that have existed even before VAWA’s inception. The Alaska tribal public safety pilot builds on Congressman Young’s concept and provides a targeted solution to a unique Alaska problem,” said Murkowski. “Communities all across Alaska have lacked means to seek help or justice for far too long. This legislation addresses those existing problems and will help communities in preventing violence toward women and children and keep them safe. That is our ultimate goal.”

Tribal Title: Senator Murkowski, Vice Chairman of the Senate Committee on Indian Affairs (SCIA), along with Chairman Brian Schatz (D-HI) released draft legislation of a tribal title to VAWA, which builds on previous legislation considered in the Committee, oversight hearings on public safety in Indian country and Alaska Native communities and is the product of years of work with tribal advocates. This VAWA 2022 includes Murkowski and Schatz’s tribal title, which works to jointly examine and find solutions to address violence against Native people and restore justice to their communities. In 2013, the SCIA was instrumental in securing inclusion and enactment of the bipartisan tribal title that authorized the special domestic violence criminal jurisdiction in the Violence Against Women Act of 2013. The Alaska pilot in the tribal title does not repeal Public Law 280 in Alaska nor does it create any Indian Country in the State. The tribal title will allow a limited number of Tribes in Alaska, on a pilot basis, to exercise special tribal criminal jurisdiction. This

special tribal criminal jurisdiction will be exercised on a concurrent basis with the State.

"Each reauthorization to the law has identified measures needed to improve protections and services for American Indian and Alaska Native women in the majority of Indian country. Because of the jurisdictional challenges in Alaska created by Public Law 280, the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act and the timing of historical events, Alaska Tribes have been effectively left out of many of the improvements. The creation of the pilot project begins to address the gaps that prior laws and policies have created and begins to address ways to provide recognition of authority and resources for Alaska Native Tribes. The Alaska Tribal Public Safety Empowerment Act in Subtitle B, recognizes the situation in Alaska, and demonstrates that again Senator Murkowski understands our unique challenges and provides meaningful solutions to address the disproportionate rate of violence against Alaska Native women."

— Michelle Demmert, Law and Policy Director of the Alaska Native Women's Resource Center

The reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act, especially the inclusion of key tribal provisions, such as the Alaska Tribal Public Safety Empowerment Pilot Project, will enhance our tribes' abilities to protect our communities. Recognizing Alaska tribes' criminal jurisdiction over Natives within village boundaries and piloting special tribal criminal jurisdiction over non-Natives are crucial steps toward ending the law enforcement emergency in Rural Alaska. Thank you Senator Murkowski and the Senate Committee on

Indian Affairs for working to protect Alaska Native women and families. This is a step in the right direction and will directly impact all of our tribal communities in a positive way.

— Vivian Korthius, CEO of the Association of Village Council Presidents

The Alaska Native Justice Center supports the tribal provisions and applauds an Alaska solution to our well documented public safety crisis. Years of effort, and compromise have resulted in this Alaska specific solution. The tribal title ensures that Alaska Tribes are given the tools and resources necessary to combat this crisis. Self-determination is a proven practice that recognizes that tribes are in the best position to address these types of issues. We appreciate the Senator's leadership and her efforts to find an effective, practical solution to a complicated issue. ANJC looks forward to the passage of the bill and stands ready to support its implementation.

— Alex Cleghorn, Senior Legal and Policy Director of the Alaska Native Justice Center

Bree's Law: Senator Murkowski worked with her colleague Senator Dan Sullivan (R-AK) on the provision entitled Bree's Law, named after Breanna (Bree) Moore, a 20-year-old Alaskan who was murdered by her boyfriend in 2014. It drives education initiatives to enable youth, parents, and advocates to recognize, prevent, and mitigate teen dating violence. This provision will authorize a grant program for the purpose of developing education and programs relating to teen dating violence and abuse awareness and

prevention, and will create an interagency working group to address teen dating violence composed of various federal agencies which will include parents of teen dating violence victims and survivors of teen dating violence. The interagency working group will require an annual report to the Secretary of Health and Human Service detailing recommendation to reduce and prevent teen dating violence.

"As parents who have experienced the devastation of losing our daughter to dating violence, we strongly support the Violence Against Women Act of 2022. After Bree's murder, we worked with the Alaska Legislature to pass two laws that require teen dating violence awareness and prevention education, known as Bree's Law. These efforts resulted in a significant drop in dating violence in Alaska. The passage of VAWA, which includes Bree's Law, will help youth across our nation develop safe and healthy relationships. We thank Senator Lisa Murkowski for her leadership today, and strongly urge all of Congress to support this vital legislation."

— Cindy & Butch Moore

Survivors' Access to Supportive Care Act: Senator Murkowski, along with Senator Patty Murray (D-WA), wrote the Survivors' Access to Supportive Care Act (SACSA) provision aimed to help improve and expand healthcare services for survivors of sexual assault. SACSA would direct the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) to establish a national training and continuing education pilot program to expand access to healthcare for survivors of sexual assault and develop federal standards around examinations and treatment. It establishes a pilot grant program to expand medical forensic exam training

and services to new providers to increase access, and create a national sexual assault taskforce to better understand sexual assault health care services and treatment and address survivors' needs.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has shined a spotlight on both the desperate and disparate needs within our healthcare system, including treatment for trauma associated with sexual assault, intimate partner violence, neglect or other forms of intentional injury. Passing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) is the single most important thing that can be done to strengthen the healthcare and criminal justice response for victims of violence. The programs stemming from VAWA ensure that the services forensic nurses provide to survivors of violence are accessible, available in all communities and result in improved care."

— Jennifer Pierce-Weeks, BSN, RN, SANE-A, SANE-P, Chief Executive Officer, International Association of Forensic Nurses

Ensuring Forensic Care for all Victims Act: Senator Murkowski worked with Senator John Hickenlooper (D-CO) on the Ensuring Forensic Care for All Victims Act. This initiative will improve access to medical forensics for victims of violence by authorizing demonstration grants to provide an evidence-based and trauma-informed care approach for a broad group of providers, including emergency service providers, registered nurses, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, physicians, and community health aides and practitioners. The legislation, which builds upon the work of a pilot program run through the University of Alaska Anchorage called the Alaska Comprehensive Training Forensic Academy, ensures there are healthcare providers in rural

communities who are able to provide basic medical forensic services to all victims of violence.

"There are programs dedicated to developing, promoting, and training nurses to respond to sexual assault for victims within the first 5-7 days after assault, but more training is needed for victims who do not meet that time threshold or who have experienced other forms of violence such as strangulation, elder abuse, and domestic violence. For these victims, there are no standardized medical forensic programs. I started the Alaska Comprehensive Forensic Training Academy because I believe strongly that all victims of violence deserve evaluation and care from forensically trained health care providers (including nurses, doctors, nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and community health aides). This training is especially important in Alaska given our epidemic of interpersonal violence. Including provisions from the Ensuring Forensic Care for All Victims Act in the Violence Against Women Act of 2022 will provide much-needed education regarding trauma-informed care to health care professionals."

— *Angelia Trujillo DNP, WHNP-BC, Founder of Alaska Comprehensive Forensic Training Academy.*

"The State of Alaska experiences a number of challenges in addressing the prevalence of interpersonal violence. The enormity of this challenge has led to program innovations that Alaska can share with the rest of the country. I am thankful to Senator Murkowski for including language in the Violence Against Women Act that would authorize demonstration programs for evidence-based

and trauma-informed care across the country, and I extremely proud of the University of Alaska Anchorage in leading this effort.”

— ***Pat Pitney, Interim President for the University of Alaska.***

“I applaud the work of Congress and the leadership of Senator Murkowski in brokering an agreement to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. The legislation includes language inspired by the Alaska Comprehensive Forensic Training Academy at the University of Alaska Anchorage. UAA provides vital training for healthcare professionals serving some of our most vulnerable communities.”

— ***Sean Parnell, Chancellor, University of Alaska Anchorage.***

NICS Denial Notification Act: This package includes the bipartisan NICS Denial Notification Act, of which Senator Murkowski is a cosponsor, which requires the Attorney General to issue a notice to State, local, or Tribal law enforcement and prosecutors if an individual has attempted to purchase a firearm and been denied pursuant to the national instant criminal background check system. Reports are required to be made to the relevant parties within 24 hours and must include the date and time of the notice, the location where the purchaser attempted to obtain the firearm, and the identity of the person. The Attorney General is required to notify the relevant parties if it is determined that the person was not prohibited from obtaining a firearm.

"In Alaska, we understand that often firearms are in the home for hunting and to provide safety when conducting food gathering or fishing. The

provisions in the proposed law addresses when a person prohibited from possessing firearms, attempts to buy a firearm. Any firearms restriction is a direct result of the perpetrator's own behavior in which there was a threat of harm or actual harm committed. Studies have shown that domestic violence incidents involving firearms are twelve times more likely to result in death than incidents involving other weapons or bodily force. We are well aware that these federally mandated precautions may temporarily limit access to hunting activities. However, the preservation of life makes this a necessary balance of priorities."

— Tamra Truett Jerue, Executive Director Alaska Native Women's Resource Center

In addition to Senators Murkowski, Feinstein, Ernst, and Durbin, the bill is cosponsored by Senators Patrick Leahy (D-VT) Susan Collins (R-ME), Patty Murray (D-WA), Shelley Moore Capito (R-WV) Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Rob Portman (R-OH), Brian Schatz (D-HI), John Cornyn (R-TX), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Kevin Cramer (R-ND) Ron Wyden (D-OR), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Jerry Moran (R-KS), Joe Manchin (D-WV), and Richard Burr (R-NC).

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