

# ***VAWA Has Lost its Way***

## ***Help us to Help Victims and Protect Working Families***

The Violence Against Women Act, first passed in 1994, has given rise to a multi-billion dollar, scandal-ridden industry that has harmed many in the name of helping a few.

It's time for persons who care about helping victims of violence to come together to fix this broken law.

***"We have no evidence to date that VAWA has led to a decrease in the overall levels of violence against women."*** -- Angela Moore Parmley, PhD, U.S. Department of Justice

*Look at the Facts,  
Decide for Yourself*

For years, the domestic violence industry has trafficked in misleading statistics and negative gender stereotypes. Now it's time to take a good hard look at whether taxpayer money is being well-spent:

### **1. Protection Orders are Ineffective**

VAWA promotes the easy availability of restraining orders. But research shows restraining orders do not work. In some cases, these orders make the situation worse.

*"The adoption of certain types of protection order statutes is associated with ... increases in the number of black women killed by their unmarried partners."* – Researcher Lora Dugan

### **2. Pro-Arrest Causes More Harm than Good**

VAWA has spent millions of dollars for policies to encourage arrest. But according to a recent Harvard University study, mandatory arrest laws have actually *increased* partner homicides by 54%.

*"At worst, the criminal justice system increases violence against women. At best, it has little or no effect."* — New York University vice provost Linda Mills, PhD

### **3. Prosecution Silences Victims' Voices**

VAWA pays jurisdictions to implement "no-drop" prosecution. These cases tie prosecutors'

hands, add to the backlog of court dockets, and silence women's voices.

In one case a California prosecutor jailed a woman for 8 days for refusing to testify. The woman later won a \$125,000 settlement for false imprisonment.

*"I never felt like a victim until I dealt with the police."* – Laura P., domestic violence victim, Sacramento, Calif.

### **4. Judicial Training is Biased**

VAWA has spent millions to train judges and others. These programs shamelessly distort the facts and instruct judges to ignore due process.

*"Your job is not to become concerned about all the constitutional rights of the man that you're violating as you grant a restraining order."*— Advice given to judges at New Jersey seminar

### **5. Abuser Programs are "Absolutely Ineffective"**

Domestic violence programs require offenders to attend treatment classes based on the so-called "Duluth" model that have been compared to a thought-reform experiment. Not surprisingly, these programs are ineffective.

*"Research shows that Duluth-oriented treatments are absolutely ineffective, and have no discernible impact on rates of recidivism."* — Donald Dutton, PhD

### *Women's Groups Criticize Domestic Violence Laws*

Women's groups are saying domestic violence laws are hurting more than they help:

- *Independent Women's Forum:* "Men may become alienated from and hostile to the system in the conviction that it is stacked against them and unjustly favors women."
- *True Equality Network:* "VAWA has spawned an abuse industry that continually expands the definition of domestic violence and condones the filing of false allegations, while ignoring the needs of true victims."
- *Ms. Foundation for Women:* "Criminalization of social problems has led to mass incarceration of men, especially young men of color, decimating marginalized communities."

## *Unfolding Scandal at Florida Abuse Shelters*

Reports have emerged in recent months of widespread mistreatment of women and girls in Florida abuse shelters:

- At the Another Way Shelter in Lake City, an unattended 4-year-old girl was sexually molested by an older girl staying at the shelter.
- At the SafeSpace shelter in Stuart, 26-year-old Milaus Almore was fatally stabbed by co-resident Marilyn Hooks.
- Kathy Catino, director of the Naples Shelter for Abused Women, was forced to resign after assaulting an employee.

Other reports have emerged of child abuse at other shelters across the nation.<sup>1</sup>

## *Disproportionate Impact on African-American Communities*

State laws have been broadened to the point that any marital squabble or lover's quarrel can be considered to be domestic "violence." As a result, judges issue restraining orders without demanding any proof or hard evidence. Now, 2-3 million temporary restraining orders are issued each year.<sup>2</sup>

As a result of the abuse of restraining orders and mandatory arrest, African-American communities have been disproportionately affected.

## *Turning its Back on Equity and Fairness*

Connecticut Governor M. Jodi Rell has revealed, "Domestic violence cuts across all races, all income brackets, all levels of education – *and both sexes.*"

But when an abused man turns to VAWA-funded programs for help, all he gets is a cold shoulder.

## *Eight Problem Areas*

RADAR has identified 8 areas with VAWA that need to be reformed:

1. Has been ineffective and has placed victims at greater risk of violence.
2. Undermines basic civil liberties and the presumption of innocence.
3. Has had a disproportionate effect on African-American communities.
4. Undermines the family, escalates partner conflict, and discourages reconciliation.
5. Fosters sex-based discrimination.
6. Promotes half-truths, myths, and falsehoods about domestic violence.
7. Encourages immigration fraud.
8. VAWA-funded programs lack accountability and allow wasteful use of taxpayer dollars.

## *Fix VAWA Now!*

Domestic violence is a problem that we need to take seriously. But the Violence Against Women Act has harmed far more women, men, and children than it has helped. VAWA will soon be coming up for reauthorization.

**We invite persons who care about helping victims and protecting families to help us fix this broken law.**

**(((RADAR**

**Respecting Accuracy in Domestic Abuse Reporting**

*A coalition of over 100 organizations around the country has come together to reform domestic violence laws:*  
[www.mediaradar.org/docs/VAWA-Reform-Coalition-Declaration.pdf](http://www.mediaradar.org/docs/VAWA-Reform-Coalition-Declaration.pdf)

*For more information, contact RADAR at:*  
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<sup>1</sup>[www.ifeminists.net/e107\\_plugins/content/content.php?content.360](http://www.ifeminists.net/e107_plugins/content/content.php?content.360)

<sup>2</sup> RADAR: Without restraint: The use and abuse of domestic restraining orders. 2006.  
[www.mediaradar.org/docs/VAWA-Restraining-Orders.pdf](http://www.mediaradar.org/docs/VAWA-Restraining-Orders.pdf)