

Fact Sheet: Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA)

MARCH 16, 2022 • [STATEMENTS AND RELEASES](#)

This week, President Biden signed into law the Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022, bipartisan legislation passed by Congress as part of the Omnibus appropriations package.

One of the driving forces of President Biden's career has been fighting back against abuses of power. That force led him to write and champion the groundbreaking Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) as a U.S. Senator, landmark legislation that first passed in 1994. In the nearly three decades since, he has worked with Members of Congress from both parties to pass legislation to renew and strengthen VAWA three times: in 2000, 2005, and 2013. Each time, he worked to expand access to safety and support for all survivors and increase prevention efforts. Preventing and responding to gender-based violence wherever it occurs, and in all of its forms, has remained a cornerstone of the President's career in public service—from VAWA reauthorization to a national campaign to combat campus sexual assault to reforms to address sexual assault and harassment in the military.

While incidents of domestic violence and sexual assault have declined significantly since VAWA first took effect—and efforts to increase access to services, healing, and justice for survivors have improved with each iteration of VAWA—much work remains.

The 2022 reauthorization of VAWA strengthens this landmark law, including by:

- Reauthorizing all current VAWA grant programs until 2027 and, in many cases, increasing authorization levels.
- Expanding special criminal jurisdiction of Tribal courts to cover non-Native perpetrators of sexual assault, child abuse, stalking, sex trafficking, and assaults on tribal law enforcement officers on tribal lands; and supporting the development of a pilot project to enhance access to safety for survivors in Alaska Native villages.

- Increasing services and support for survivors from underserved and marginalized communities—including for LGBTQ+ survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking; funding survivor-centered, community-based restorative practice services; and increasing support for culturally specific services and services in rural communities.
- Establishing a federal civil cause of action for individuals, whose intimate visual images are disclosed without their consent, allowing a victim to recover damages and legal fees; creating a new National Resource Center on Cybercrimes Against Individuals; and supporting State, Tribal, and local government efforts to prevent and prosecute cybercrimes, including cyberstalking and the nonconsensual distribution of intimate images.
- Improving prevention and response to sexual violence, including through increased support for the Rape Prevention and Education Program and Sexual Assault Services Program; expansion of prevention education for students in institutions of higher education; and enactment of the Fairness for Rape Kit Backlog Survivors Act, which requires state victim compensation programs to allow sexual assault survivors to file for compensation without being unfairly penalized due to rape kit backlogs.
- Strengthening the application of evidence-based practices by law enforcement in responding to gender-based violence, including by promoting the use of trauma-informed, victim-centered training and improving homicide reduction initiatives.
- Improving the healthcare system’s response to domestic violence and sexual assault, including through enhanced training for sexual assault forensic examiners.
- Updating the SMART Prevention Program and the CHOOSE Youth Program to reduce dating violence, help children who have been exposed to domestic violence, and engage men in preventing violence.
- Enacting the National Instant Criminal Background Check System (NICS) Denial Notification Act to help state law enforcement investigate and prosecute cases against individuals legally prohibited from purchasing firearms who try to do so.

Over the past year, the Biden-Harris Administration has taken significant steps to prevent and respond to gender-based violence at home and abroad:

- Increased funding for domestic violence and sexual assault services. Directed [\\$1 billion in supplemental funding](#) for domestic violence and sexual assault services through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) in response to the pandemic, including [\\$49.5 million for culturally-specific community-based organizations](#) that help survivors from historically marginalized communities access the services and support they need. The ARP also provided approximately 70,000 housing choice vouchers to local Public Housing Authorities in order to assist individuals and families, including those who are fleeing, or attempting to flee, from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or human trafficking.
- Reformed the military justice system to address sexual assault, harassment, and related crimes. Signed into law the [National Defense Authorization Act](#), which included sweeping reforms to the military justice system—the most significant since the Uniform Code of Military Justice was established more than seventy years ago—and implemented the President’s campaign promise to address the scourge of sexual assault in our armed forces. In conjunction with the President’s [Executive Order](#) on military justice reform, this bipartisan, historic law adopts core recommendations of the [Independent Review Commission on Sexual Assault](#), as called for by President Biden, and fundamentally shifts how the military prosecutes and investigates sexual assault, domestic violence, sexual harassment, and other serious crimes, and increases prevention initiatives and support for survivors.
- Ended forced arbitration for sexual assault and harassment. Signed into law the Ending Forced Arbitration of Sexual Assault and Sexual Harassment Act of 2021—bipartisan legislation that empowers survivors of sexual assault and harassment by giving them a choice to go to court instead of being forced into arbitration.
- Directed action to protect students from campus sexual assault. Directed the Department of Education to review Title IX regulations and other agency actions to ensure that all students have an educational environment that is free from discrimination on the basis of sex. The Department is developing a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking currently under review that will address the need for protection for students who experience campus sexual assault while treating all students fairly.
- Increased resources for survivors of crime, including gender-based violence. Signed into law the Amendments to the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which passed Congress with strong bipartisan support and expands the allocation of resources for the Crime Victims Fund. This has already resulted in

an increase of hundreds of millions of dollars of non-taxpayer funding for essential and lifesaving services to crime victims around the country, including survivors of gender-based violence.

- Led multinational effort to address online harassment and abuse. Launched the Global Partnership for Action on Gender-Based Online Harassment and Abuse during the 2022 meeting of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women, together with the governments of Denmark, Australia, the United Kingdom, and Sweden. This multinational initiative will align countries, international organizations, and civil society to better prioritize, understand, and address the growing scourge of technology-facilitated gender-based violence.
- Prioritized the crisis of Missing or Murdered Indigenous People, including gender-based violence. Issued an executive order directing the Departments of Justice, Interior, Homeland Security and Health and Human Services to create a strategy to improve public safety and justice for Native Americans and to address the epidemic of missing or murdered Indigenous peoples, which disproportionately affect Native women, girls, and LGBTQI+ individuals; the Department of the Interior established the Missing and Murdered Unit to pursue justice for missing or murdered American Indians and Alaska Natives.
- Strengthened regional leadership on violence against Indigenous women and girls. Re-launched the United States' leadership and participation in the Trilateral Working Group on Violence Against Indigenous Women and Girls with the Governments of Mexico and Canada. The White House will host the Fourth Convening of the Trilateral Working Group this summer to improve and reaffirm our respective national and regional commitments to prevent and respond to violence against Indigenous women and girls through increased access to justice and prevention services.

On International Women's Day in 2021, President Biden signed an [Executive Order](#) creating the White House Gender Policy Council and calling for the development of the first-ever government-wide National Action Plan to End Gender-Based Violence, as well as an update to the 2016 United States Strategy to Prevent and Respond to Gender-Based Violence Globally. These strategies will provide a roadmap to guide the Biden-Harris Administration's whole-of-government effort to end gender-based violence—and in so doing, create a society where survivors are supported and all people can live free from abuse.