



February 27, 2013

Representative
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of Family Research Council and the thousands of families we represent, I want to urge you to vote NO on S. 47, Senator Leahy's (D-VT) reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that passed the Senate earlier this month. FRC will be scoring this vote on our scorecard for the 113th Congress. This latest iteration of VAWA veers recklessly into new territory while ignoring old problems. The bill provides no assurance the funds authorized will be maximized to benefit the victims of abuse rather than the bureaucrats and interest groups who wield it.

First, S. 47 speciously extends the criminal jurisdiction of Indian tribes to non-Indians by “recognizing and affirming” the non-existent rights of self-governing bodies to enforce VAWA over “all persons.” It is unclear how this will affect law enforcement arrangements. Second, S. 47 expands immigration law by vastly increasing the number of visas available to undocumented workers, a move that flouts the legal reasoning behind our system of annual caps. Third, Leahy's bill would bar funds from going to grantees who may have religious objections to homosexuality even though no documented case of refused services has been found.

On the other hand, examples of grantees misappropriating funds have been documented. Audits performed from 1998 through 2010 revealed a staggering number of violations and examples of questionable book keeping. S. 47 does not go far enough in ensuring the end of these abuses.

Instead of obscuring criminal law as S. 47 does when it invites courts to consider the intentionality of assaults, a loose term that would create a prosecutorial patchwork, S. 47 should be working towards a clearer definition of domestic abuse. This definition should identify real victims, encourage counseling where possible, increase grantee accountability, and recognize mutual partner abuse.

Lastly the Senate version of the bill included a renewal of grants to fight human trafficking. While FRC supports such efforts that language fails to include any protections for religious groups. This allows the Obama Administration to continue denying grants to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, one of the largest and best equipped in the world to fight human trafficking, because they refuse to perform or refer for abortions. This denial puts thousands of trafficked women at risk of further exploitation and violence, sacrificed at the altar of abortion politics.

S. 47 does none of the above. Rather, it uses VAWA as a vehicle to advance the expansion of tribal jurisdiction, immigration visas and unnecessary anti-discrimination laws. For these reasons FRC urges you to vote NO on S. 47, the Senate passed version of the reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act and will include any such vote in our scorecard for the 113th Congress.

Sincerely,

Thomas McClusky
Senior Vice President

FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL

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