

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated

A Public Service Sorority Founded in 1913

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URGENT ACTION ALERT

Reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act

Dear Sorors and friends of Delta,

On Thursday, April 26th, the United States Senate overwhelmingly voted to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (S. 1925). The bill in its final form had bipartisan support with a total of 15 Republicans voting to extend this two decade old landmark legislation for a 68 - 31 tally.

However, the bill's third reauthorization since 2000 was not a hit out of the ballpark. Although this bill seeks to protect women against domestic violence, in a Presidential election year, the tenor is one that rings with an all too familiar political tone. To expand the provisions of this legislation, an investigation of more than 2,000 interviews were conducted nationwide within the judicial system to include law enforcement, courts, legal services as well as victim services professionals. This latest version would expand protection to immigrant, tribal, and LGBT victims. Results of the data suggest that all women need equal protection of the law; regardless of their background or orientation. In other words, no one should be turned away.

The bill will now move to the House where a similar bill is up for debate. Nonetheless, the proposed House legislation is not without controversy. Specifically, a significant cadre in the House of Representatives have expressed their concerns about expanding three major provisions to undocumented immigrant victims, the ban on discrimination against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender victims and the authority given to Native American tribes to address domestic violence. The House bill's sponsor, Representative Sandy Adams (R-FL) is on record stating that controversial issues **would not** detract them from reauthorizing this important piece of legislation.

Sorors, Deltas cannot be silent on this issue. Passage is not certain. Therefore, we urge you to act now in advocating for reauthorization of this bill. As an organization of women who have given their full support since the law's 1994 inception, our voices must continue to be heard that women everywhere should be protected from domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking.

To express your concern, call your respective Congressional Member in the United States House of Representatives at 202-224-3121. Be sure to follow-up with written correspondence to your House Member stating why the Violence Against Women Act reauthorization needs to go to the House Floor. You may email or fax your letter urging them to support at a minimum the Senate version of this bill. When the bill comes to the House Floor, the Violence Against Women Act must be swiftly reauthorized to ensure the continuation of vital, life-saving programs and laws that protect women. Delta Sigma Theta joins several organizations in our advocacy efforts for the expeditious passage of this legislation.

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Sorors, your voice does count, but you must make it heard. More than 1,000 state, local, and national organizations have joined together with letters of support for S. 1925, which was recently passed. We must continue to be on the alert for ongoing information from Delta Sigma Theta with suggested action steps for members and friends to ensure passage when the bill hits the House Floor. We must remain vigilant in our efforts and let our legislators hear from us. For more resources at this time, you may wish to visit: *The National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence Against Women* (www.4vawa.org) for additional fact sheets, toolkits, and other action information items.

This letter and links to informational sources is being posted on the Delta website and sent to all members via email. **The time to act is now.** I am asking every Delta to write and call your member of Congress in the House of Representatives post haste regarding your expectations for their vote as a member of their voting constituency. Let all of Congress hear from us on this vital issue. Let Delta's resounding voice, calling for the reauthorization of this act to protect all women and girls, be heard throughout the halls of Congress.

Sincerely,

Cynthia M. A. Bulter-McIntyre
National President

Rev. Gwendolyn E. Boyd
Patricia Watkins Lattimore
Co-Chairs, National Social Action Commission