

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 8

RESOLUTION CHAPTER 9

Assembly Joint Resolution No. 8—Relative to violence against women.

[Filed with Secretary of State March 1, 2013.]

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

AJR 8, John A. Pérez. Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act.

This measure would urge the President to sign and Congress to pass the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act and ensure the sustainability of vital programs designed to keep women and families safe from violence and abuse.

WHEREAS, The federal Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was developed with the input of advocates from around the country with diverse backgrounds and experiences, and addresses the real and most important needs of victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking; and

WHEREAS, VAWA represents the voices of women and their families, and the voices of victims, survivors, and advocates; and

WHEREAS, VAWA was first enacted in 1994, and has been the centerpiece of the federal government's efforts to stamp out domestic and sexual violence. VAWA provides millions of dollars to support programs for victim services, transitional housing, and legal assistance, as well as tools that law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges need to hold offenders accountable and keep communities safe while supporting victims; and

WHEREAS, Domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking, once considered private matters to be dealt with behind closed doors, have been brought out of the darkness; and

WHEREAS, VAWA has been successful because it has had consistently strong, bipartisan support for nearly two decades; and

WHEREAS, Senators Patrick Leahy and Mike Crapo and Representative Gwen Moore have introduced identical legislation, the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act, in their respective houses with language that includes several updates and improvements to the law, including the following:

(a) An emphasis on the need to effectively respond to sexual assault crime by adding new purpose areas and a 25-percent set-aside in the STOP (Services, Training, Officers, and Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program (STOP Program) and the Grants to Encourage Arrest Policies and Enforcement of Protection Orders Program.

(b) Improvements in tools to prevent domestic violence homicides by training law enforcement, victim service providers, and court personnel to

identify and manage high-risk offenders and connecting high-risk victims to crisis intervention services.

(c) Critical improvements that provide important protections for students, immigrant women, as well as the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender and Native American communities.

(d) Improvements in responses to the high rate of violence against women in tribal communities by strengthening concurrent tribal criminal jurisdiction over perpetrators who assault Indian spouses and dating partners in Indian countries.

(e) Measures to strengthen housing protections for victims by applying existing housing protections to nine additional federal housing programs.

(f) Measures to promote accountability to ensure that federal funds are used for their intended purposes.

(g) Consolidation of programs and reductions in authorization levels to address fiscal concerns, and renewed focus on programs that have been most successful.

(h) Technical corrections to update definitions throughout the law to provide uniformity and continuity; and

WHEREAS, There is a need to maintain services for victims and families at the local, state, and federal levels. VAWA reauthorization would allow existing programs to continue uninterrupted, and would provide for the development of new initiatives to address key areas of concern. These initiatives include the following:

(a) Addressing the high rates of domestic violence, dating violence, and sexual assault among women 16 to 24 years of age, inclusive.

(b) Improving the response to sexual assault with best practices, training, and communication tools for law enforcement, as well as for health care and legal professionals.

(c) Preventing domestic violence homicides through enhanced training for law enforcement, advocates, and others who interact with those at risk; now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the Assembly and the Senate of the State of California, jointly, That the Legislature requests the President to sign and Congress to pass the Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act and ensure the sustainability of vital programs designed to keep women and families safe from violence and abuse; and be it further

Resolved, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies of this resolution to the President and Vice President of the United States, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, to the Majority Leader of the Senate, to each Senator and Representative from California in the Congress of the United States, and to the author for appropriate distribution.