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January 11, 2012

Dear Members of Congress,

Since its passage in 1994, the Violence Against Women Act (“VAWA”) has shined a bright light on domestic violence, bringing the issue out of the shadows and into the forefront of our efforts to protect women and families. VAWA transformed the response to domestic violence at the local, state and federal level. Its successes have been dramatic, with the annual incidence of domestic violence falling by more than 50 percent¹.

Even though the advancements made since in 1994 have been significant, a tremendous amount of work remains and we believe it is critical that the Congress reauthorize VAWA. Every day in this country, abusive husbands or partners kill three women, and for every victim killed, there are nine more who narrowly escape that fate². We see this realized in our home states every day. Earlier this year in Delaware, three children – ages 12, 2 ½ and 1 ½ – watched their mother be beaten to death by her ex-boyfriend on a sidewalk. In Maine last summer, an abusive husband subject to a protective order murdered his wife and two young children before taking his own life.

Reauthorizing VAWA will send a clear message that this country does not tolerate violence against women and show Congress’ commitment to reducing domestic violence, protecting women from sexual assault and securing justice for victims.

VAWA reauthorization will continue critical support for victim services and target three key areas where data shows we must focus our efforts in order to have the greatest impact:

- Domestic violence, dating violence, and sexual assault are most prevalent among young women aged 16-24, with studies showing that youth attitudes are still largely tolerant of violence, and that women abused in adolescence are more likely to be abused again as adults. VAWA reauthorization will help us break that cycle by consolidating and strengthening programs aimed at both prevention and intervention, with a particular emphasis on more effectively engaging men and local community-based resources in the process.

- A woman who has been sexually assaulted can be subjected to further distress when the healthcare, law enforcement, and legal response to her attack is not coordinated and productive. Whether it is a first responder without

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¹ U.S. Department of Justice. Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. (Sept. 2009) *Criminal Victimization, 2008*.

² Conversation between Lynn Rosenthal and with Jackie Campbell, May 2010.

adequate training, a rape kit that goes unprocessed for lack of funding, or a phone call between a crisis counselor and a prosecutor that never takes place, sexual assault victims deserve better. We must develop and implement best practices, training, and communication tools across disciplines in order to effectively prosecute and punish perpetrators, as well as help victims heal and rebuild their lives.

- There is a growing consensus among practitioners and researchers that domestic violence homicides are predictable and, therefore, often preventable. We can save the lives of untold numbers of potential homicide victims with better training for advocates, law enforcement, and others who interact with victims to recognize the warning signs and react meaningfully.

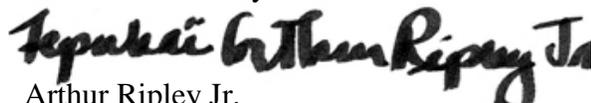
The fight to protect women from violence is one that never ends. It is not a year-to-year issue, which is why we think it is critical that Congress reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. We know a great deal more about domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking than we did 17 years ago. Reauthorizing VAWA will allow us to build on those lessons and continue to make progress and save lives.

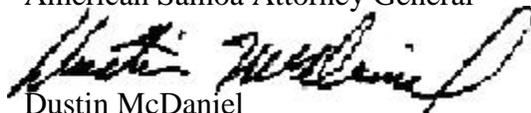
VAWA was last reauthorized in 2006 and time is of the essence for reauthorization of this important law. We urge Congress to take on this critical mission and reauthorize VAWA.

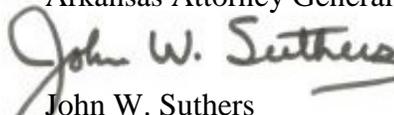
Thank you.

Sincerely,


Joseph R. "Beau" Biden III
Delaware Attorney General

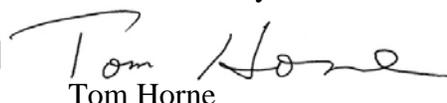

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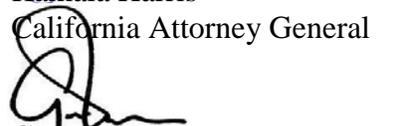

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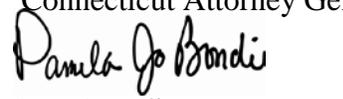

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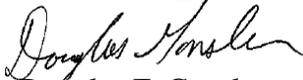
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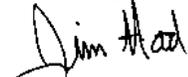
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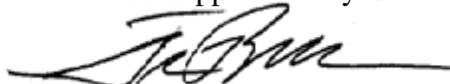
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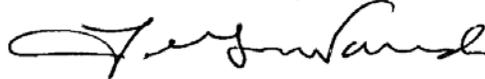
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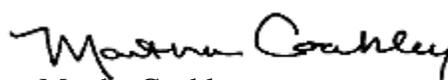
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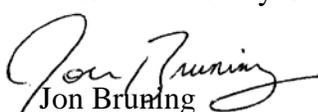
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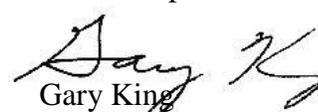
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