

Victims of Crime Act (VOCA)

Why it Matters

Enacted by President Reagan in 1984, the Victims of Crime Act created the Crime Victims Fund as a non-taxpayer funding resource for services that help crime victims cope with the trauma and aftermath of crime. More than 4,400 local agencies from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa and the Northern Mariana Islands, depend on the VOCA Fund assistance grants to serve nearly 4 million crime victims each year.

“In every State and every community across the country, the Crime Victims Fund plays an essential role in helping crime victims and their families meet critical expenses, recover from the horrific crimes they endured, and move forward with their lives” - US Senator Patrick Leahy (D-VT).

HOW VOCA WORKS

- **VOCA funds consist of fines and penalties collected from federal offenders NOT tax payer dollars.**
- A VOCA balance was created to ensure that in years when fine collections are low, funding to states and programs won't be affected.
- The entire amount in the VOCA fund is used solely on victim assistance programs.
- VOCA funds are distributed to states to support two types of programs: 1) crime victim compensation programs and 2) victim assistance programs.
- **Crime victim compensation programs** pay many out-of-pocket expenses incurred by victims as a result of crime, including medical and counseling costs, funeral bills, and lost wages.
- **VOCA-funded Victim assistance programs**, such as rape crisis centers and domestic violence shelters, provide life saving services, support and guidance in the aftermath of crime.
- Under the President's Budget Proposal the VOCA fund will be empty at the beginning of 2008 as grants are calculated and awarded at the beginning of each year.

“This program matches compassion with conservative fiscal responsibility.”

- US Senator Tom Coburn (R-OK)

WHO VOCA HELPS

- VOCA-funded victim assistance programs **serve nearly 4 million crime victims each year.**
- These services help victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, elder abuse, and drunk driving, as well as survivors of homicide victims.
- VOCA provides funding for the Federal Victim Notification System.
- VOCA funds provide emergency relief to victims of terrorism and mass violence.
- VOCA funds are used for child abuse prevention and treatment grants.
- Local prosecutors, law enforcement agencies, and victim advocates are all eligible for VOCA funds.
- **Domestic violence and sexual assault victims make up half of those receiving services.** They receive this type of assistance through shelters and rape crisis centers and child abuse treatment programs.



VOCA IN DANGER

- **For a second straight year the Administration is attempting to rescind the balance in the VOCA Fund.**
- This request will take \$1.255 billion from the VOCA Fund and put it in the general treasury and may NOT be used for victims' services.
- **This would mean that in the beginning of 2008 there would be no funds available in the VOCA Fund.**
- Since fiscal year 2000, Congress has set a cap on annual VOCA fund obligations expressly for the purpose of ensuring that a stable level of funding will remain available for these programs in future years.
- This "rainy day" balance in the fund has been used to make up the difference between annual deposits and distributions three times during the past six years.

CONSEQUENCES OF LOSING VOCA

- With the VOCA Fund now assisting nearly 4 million victims each year, the impact of eliminating the program will be devastating.
- Eliminating the VOCA Fund will force programs to start turning away crime victims in need of services.
- **Without adequately funding for the VOCA Fund, programs in all 50 states, DC and US territories will have to layoff staff, limit services in certain geographic areas, and discontinue services for special populations of victims such as secondary victims (children).**
- State budgets will be forced to shoulder the burden of funding their victim assistance programs or discontinue their program entirely.

HOW TO SAVE VOCA

- **CONTACT YOUR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS AND TELL THEM TO REJECT THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET REQUEST TO RESCIND THE VOCA BALANCE. Congress must PROTECT THE VOCA FUND!**
- Write, email and call your Members of Congress. Contact information can be found at www.congress.org or by calling the Capitol Switchboard at (202) 224-3121.
- **Talk to the media about how your local programs rely on VOCA funds to help victims of crime and how VOCA funds are threatened.**
- You can find sample letters, press releases, and phone scripts to educate your legislators and media about VOCA at www.ncadv.org.

RESOURCES as of 3-1-06

For more information on the VOCA , please contact the following organizations:

- The National Association of VOCA Assistance Administrators www.navaa.org
- The National Center For Victims of Crime www.ncvc.org
- The National Organization for Victim Assistance www.trynova.org
- The National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards www.nacvcb.org
- Justice Solutions www.justicesolutions.org

For more information please see our website at www.ncadv.org or www.naesv.org.