



National Task Force to End Sexual & Domestic Violence

May 9, 2018

The Honorable John Culberson,
Chairman Commerce, Justice, Science
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jose Serrano,
Ranking Member Commerce, Justice, Science
Appropriations Subcommittee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Culberson and Ranking Member Serrano:

As the Steering Committee of the National Taskforce to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (NTF), comprising national leadership organizations advocating on behalf of sexual and domestic violence victims and women's rights, we represent hundreds of organizations across the country dedicated to ensuring **all** survivors of violence receive the protections they deserve. We write to express gratitude for continued, record investments in programs that address violence against women. We also write to express our deep concern about troubling cuts to that tribal victim services funding included in the Commerce, Justice Science Appropriations bill that will be marked up in the subcommittee today. American Indians and Alaska Natives (AI/AN) experience violence at alarmingly high rates, but the bill as currently drafted, cuts overall funding for tribal programs at the U.S. Department of Justice by more than 55%.

We are incredibly grateful that the FY18 funding bill included landmark funding for tribes from the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA). The funding will help begin to address the desperate needs of victims on tribal lands who experience disproportionate rates of violence and have very limited access to victim services.

More than 4 in 5 (84.3%) AI/AN women have experienced violence in their lifetime including:

- 56.1% who have experienced sexual violence (over 96% of which is committed by at least one non-native perpetrator);
- 55.5% who have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner;
- 48.4% who have experienced stalking; and
- 66.4% who have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner.ⁱ

In addition to exposure to high rates of violence, AI/AN victims face unique barriers to safety. Issues of tribal jurisdiction, gaps in culturally appropriate resources, the lack of availability of law enforcement, as well as very few, if any emergency shelters and rape crisis services create barriers for native survivors seeking support and safety. Nearly 40% of female Native victims

report that they are unable to receive necessary victim services.ⁱⁱ Victim services are scarce, and culturally appropriate services are practically non-existent.

The NTF has consistently supported a 5% dedicated tribal funding stream under VOCA. Most recently, the NTF shared a letter signed by over 900 organizations that also support this much needed funding stream and further investment in funding for federal programs that address domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence, and stalking in tribal communities.

While VOCA funding is available to states and territories, it has never been available to tribes. The FY18 funding bill, for the first time, allocated VOCA funding to tribal governments. Given the level of victimization of AI/ANs, direct funding is essential to establishing victim services and community programs readily accessible to victims. NTF is incredibly grateful for the commitment that appropriators made to tribal victims in FY18 and calls on Appropriators to continue providing an annual allocation. Sustainable funding is key to establishing and maintaining life-saving services in marginalized tribal communities, and removing the unique barriers that tribal victims encounter. NTF urges appropriators to maintain consistent CVF disbursements and to direct an amount equal to 5% of overall CVF disbursements directly to tribal governments.

Thank you for your careful consideration of these recommendations.

If you have questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Caroline LaPorte, J.D., National Indigenous Women's Resource Center at claporte@niwrc.org or Marium Durrani, J.D., National Network to End Domestic Violence at Mdurrani@nnev.org.

Sincerely,

The National Taskforce to End Sexual and Domestic Violence (www.4vawa.org)

ⁱ DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, NAT'L INST. OF JUSTICE, VIOLENCE AGAINST AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE WOMEN AND MEN: 2010 FINDINGS FROM THE NATIONAL INTIMATE PARTNER AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE SURVEY 26 (May 2016), <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249736.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ *Id.*