



NEWS



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NATIONAL VICTIM ADVOCACY ORGANIZATIONS APPLAUD WHITE HOUSE SEXUAL ASSAULT AWARENESS MONTH PROCLAMATION

Washington, DC--The National Center for Victims of Crime and the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence applaud President Barack Obama for yesterday's proclamation designating April as Sexual Assault Awareness Month. In becoming the first President to issue a Sexual Assault Awareness Month proclamation, President Obama has focused a national spotlight on a crime affecting more than 270,000 Americans a year.¹ The proclamation affirms decades-long efforts to raise awareness about this pervasive and dangerous crime.

Today's proclamation reflects President Obama's and Vice President Biden's long history of standing up against sexual violence. As a Senator, President Obama cosponsored and helped reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act, which Vice President Biden authored and championed. Vice President Biden also strongly backed the landmark 2005 expansion of VAWA to create the Sexual Assault Services Program, supported by the first federal funding stream specifically for rape crisis centers that provide counseling and support to sexual assault victims and their families.

"We applaud President Obama's firm commitment to combating sexual violence," said Mary Lou Leary, executive director of the National Center for Victims of Crime. "Every two minutes in our nation, a man, woman, or child is sexually assaulted.² This proclamation will inspire policymakers, law enforcement officials, and the public to help reduce the prevalence of this terrible crime."

The proclamation notes the need for greater awareness about sexual violence; the enormous physical and emotional costs borne by victims; and the need for greater offender accountability, for more rape crisis centers and other services for victims, and for a firm national commitment to reducing the impact of the crime. It also cites landmark legislation, such as the 1984 Victims of Crime Act and the Violence Against Women Act, which authorize funding for crisis intervention, hotlines, medical and criminal justice accompaniment, advocacy, counseling, and other services for victims.

"The proclamation also acknowledges millions of survivors of sexual violence as they struggle for justice and healing," said Monika Johnson Hostler, chair of the National Alliance to End Sexual Violence. "It affirms the

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work of rape crisis centers in communities across the country as they raise awareness with survivor speak-outs, Take Back the Night marches, denim days, and many other events.”

To observe Sexual Assault Awareness Month 2009, communities nationwide are conducting a wide range of awareness-raising efforts, such as issuing official proclamations, holding local events, and conducting media interviews and other public outreach. For resources for observing Sexual Assault Awareness Month, visit the National Sexual Violence Resource Center at www.nsvrc.org. To read the proclamation, visit www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Presidential-Proclamation-Marking-National-Sexual-Assault-Awareness-Month-2009, and for more information on sexual assault and other crimes, visit the National Center for Victims of Crime, www.ncvc.org.

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The National Center for Victims of Crime is dedicated to forging a national commitment to help victims of crime rebuild their lives. Through its National Crime Victim Helpline (1-800-FYI-CALL), the National Center helps victims understand the impact of crime and provides practical information about crime and victimization, skilled advocacy in the criminal justice and social service systems, and referrals to local community resources.

The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence utilizes a comprehensive grassroots communication network to shape national policy related to sexual violence and victims' needs, ensure funding for rape crisis programs and sexual assault coalitions, and provides expertise to governments, businesses and non-profit organizations addressing sexual violence in all of its forms.

¹ Shannan M. Catalano and Michael Rand, “Criminal Victimization, 2006,” (Washington, DC: Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2007), 3, <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/pub/pdf/cv06.pdf>.

² Callie Rennison., “National Crime Victimization Survey, Criminal Victimization, 2000: Changes 1999-2000 with Trends 1993-2000,” Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Justice Statistics, June 2001.