

National Organization for Women



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Dear Representative,

The National Organization for Women, with hundreds of thousands of members and supporters across the nation, including many in your home district, is adamantly opposed to the divisive, exclusionary version of the Violence Against Women Act that will be considered on the House floor tomorrow. Sponsored by Representative Sandy Adams (R-Fla.) and voted out of the Judiciary Committee 17-15 last week, H.R. 4790 not only strips important provisions that were passed by a bipartisan Senate vote of 68-31, but also changes and weakens many initiatives and preventive provisions that have been included in VAWA by both Republicans and Democrats over the past 18 years.

House Republican leadership has refused so far to allow open debate on the House floor and short-circuited discussion and votes on less hurtful and more inclusive amendments. The bill leaves out many means of addressing violence, including improved campus and housing measures, and helping victims escape violence and not lose their livelihood by assuring coverage under unemployment insurance, and it fails to continue the requirement that program recipients consult with professionals in the domestic violence and sexual assault community.

Acknowledging that the Adams bill included life-threatening provisions for immigrant victims of sexual assault and domestic violence, the House leadership has dropped some, but not all, of these hastily crafted sections. But the bill, in the words of The New York Times editorial, is still "atrocious." It disregards the biases and disrespect that certain victims face when seeking help from the criminal justice system and access to lifesaving services, effectively giving second-class treatment to Native American, immigrant and LGBT victims. The bill smacks of willful ignorance of the problem and hostility to people deemed not to be "true" victims.

NOW is not alone in our opposition to this bill. Religious, law enforcement, health care and anti-violence professionals have all asked you to oppose the Adams bill. We have no hidden agenda and no political motives. Our united goal is to pass a "real" VAWA reauthorization to continue and expand services for victims while holding perpetrators accountable for their crimes.

Constituents all over the country will be watching this vote and asking their members who voted for the Adams bill, "How could you support a bill that puts victims in danger and shields abusers?"

NOW considers a vote for H.R. 4970 a vote *against* VAWA. **Please stand up for all victims of violence and oppose H.R. 4970. Those Congress members who cannot stand up for all victims should not expect voters to stand up for them.**

For women's lives,

Terry O'Neill
President