

Baldwin hails Congress' vote on 'violence against women'

Led by Congresswoman Tammy Baldwin, the House of Representatives recently took a great step toward ensuring the safety of women in America.

By voice vote, the House authorized to make permanent the Violence Against Women Office (VAWO) in the Dept. of Justice (DOJ). Members of the House also raised the profile of the office by making the director of the VAWO a presidential appointment confirmed by the Senate.

Baldwin led efforts in the House Judiciary Committee to include this provision in the Justice Dept. Authorization Bill (HR 2215) and worked closely with her colleagues on both sides of the aisle to ensure final passage.

"The VAWO has been instrumental in heightening awareness of the impact of sexual assault and domestic violence," said Baldwin. "I'm delighted that the full House recognizes the importance of having a permanent VAWO within the Department of Justice."

Baldwin's efforts on behalf of this provision were recognized on the House floor by her colleagues. Congressman James Sensenbrenner (R-WI), chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said, "I appreciate the work of Rep. Baldwin and her willingness to ensure that this office works properly within the existing bureaucracy at the Department."

The VAWO works with the Attorney General and administers the \$270 million in annual grants to local communities. The Office also works with U.S. Attorneys to enforce federal criminal statutes regarding violence

against women. Funding was provided in the 1994 Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that was reauthorized last year for five years. Baldwin was a leader in bipartisan House and Senate efforts to pass that reauthorization.

Erin Thornley, Executive Director of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, praised Baldwin for her efforts. "The Wisconsin Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Inc. (WCASA) extends our heartfelt gratitude to Congresswoman Baldwin for her courageous efforts in making the Violence Against Women Office a permanent office," said Thornley. "The VAW Office plays a vital role in our nation's efforts to address crime. It is critical to the nation's response to sexual assault, domestic violence and stalking as well as the litany of other societal issues that are related to these violent crimes. This office is more than symbolic. It is critical and we thank Congresswoman Baldwin for recognizing it as such."

As a member of the House Judiciary Committee in the last Congress, Baldwin actively worked on strengthening VAWA, including seeking improvements to combat the problem of dating violence, violence against the elderly and women with disabilities.

"The Bureau of Justice Statistics recently released a report that contains encouraging news: overall violence against women has declined in recent years," said Baldwin. "I credit VAWA and the local and state programs that it has supported over the last six years. With a permanent VAW Office at DOJ, I hope to see this decline continue."