

Testimony of
The Honorable Thurbert E. Baker

April 16, 2002

MR. CHAIRMAN, DISTINGUISHED SENATORS, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO SPEAK WITH YOU TODAY ON THE ISSUE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, A MATTER THAT HAS BEEN THE FOCUS OF A GREAT DEAL OF MY TIME BOTH AS A LEGISLATOR AND AS ATTORNEY GENERAL FOR THE GREAT STATE OF GEORGIA.

HISTORY WILL REMEMBER EACH ONE OF US NOT SO MUCH FOR THE PROMISES WE MAKE, BUT BY THE ACTIONS WE TAKE. I BELIEVE IT IS TIME FOR AMERICA TO TAKE VERY DECISIVE ACTION IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. LET ME EXPLAIN WHY.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HAS, IN MY OPINION, REACHED CRISIS PROPORTIONS IN OUR COUNTRY.

ESTIMATES RANGE FROM 960,000 INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE AGAINST A CURRENT OR FORMER SPOUSE, BOYFRIEND, OR GIRLFRIEND PER YEAR TO 3.9 MILLION WOMEN WHO ARE PHYSICALLY ABUSED BY THEIR HUSBANDS OR LIVE-IN PARTNERS EACH YEAR. IN THE UNITED STATES, A WOMAN IS BEATEN BY HER HUSBAND OR SIGNIFICANT OTHER NEARLY EVERY 7.4 SECONDS AND 42% OF MURDERED WOMEN ARE KILLED BY THEIR INTIMATE MALE PARTNERS. NEARLY ONE THIRD OF AMERICAN WOMEN (31 PERCENT) REPORT BEING PHYSICALLY ABUSED BY A HUSBAND OR BOYFRIEND AT SOME POINT IN THEIR LIVES.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS PRIMARILY A CRIME AGAINST WOMEN AND THEIR CHILDREN. WOMEN ARE 5 TIMES MORE LIKELY TO BE VICTIMS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE THAN MEN. APPROXIMATELY 4.8 MILLION INTIMATE PARTNER RAPES AND PHYSICAL ASSAULTS ARE PERPETUATED AGAINST U.S. WOMEN ANNUALLY COMPARED TO APPROXIMATELY 2.9 MILLION INTIMATE PARTNER PHYSICAL ASSAULTS AGAINST U.S. MEN EACH YEAR. DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOT A RESPECTER OF AGE, RACE, OR INCOME. TWO THIRDS OF ELDER DOMESTIC ABUSE AND NEGLECT VICTIMS ARE WOMEN.

THE TOLL ON OUR NATION'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM IS ASTOUNDING. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT DATA SHOW THAT WOMEN ARE ABOUT 84% OF THOSE SEEKING HOSPITAL TREATMENT FOR INTENTIONAL INJURY CAUSED BY AN INTIMATE ASSAILANT. ? 1 OUT OF 3 WOMEN IN THE HOSPITAL EMERGENCY ROOMS AT ANY GIVEN TIME ARE THERE BECAUSE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. EVERY YEAR, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESULTS IN ALMOST 100,000 DAYS OF

HOSPITALIZATIONS, ALMOST 30,000 EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT VISITS AND ALMOST 40,000 VISITS TO A PHYSICIAN.

ANOTHER VICTIM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS OUR NATION'S ECONOMY. A SURVEY OF BATTERED WOMEN WHO WERE WORKING AT THE TIME THAT THEIR ABUSE OCCURRED FOUND THAT 56% OF THE WOMEN SURVEYED REPORTED THAT THEIR PARTNERS HAD HARASSED THEM AT WORK BY TELEPHONE AND/OR IN PERSON.

IT IS MY BELIEF THAT THIS PROBLEM TEARS AT THE VERY FABRIC OF OUR SOCIETY. IT THREATENS TO PULL APART THE VERY GLUE THAT HOLDS OUR WAY OF LIFE TOGETHER, THAT GLUE BEING THE FAMILY STRUCTURE.

UNFORTUNATELY, DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS ALL TOO OFTEN A SILENT EPIDEMIC, EATING AWAY AT FAMILIES WHILE SOCIETY TURNS A DEAF EAR TO THE TRAGEDY THAT LIES BEHIND CLOSED DOORS. IN OUR QUEST TO KEEP UP WITH THE JONES' ON A MATERIAL LEVEL, WE MISS THE FACT THAT FAR TOO MANY MRS. JONES' ARE VICTIMS OF VIOLENCE IN THEIR OWN HOMES. NO LONGER CAN WE SIT BACK AND ACCEPT THE ARGUMENT THAT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS A PRIVATE FAMILY MATTER. IT IS, WITHOUT A DOUBT, A VERY PUBLIC CRIME THAT OFFENDS THE CORE VALUES OF THIS GREAT NATION.

WHEN THIS ISSUE FIRST CAME TO THE FOREFRONT TEN TO FIFTEEN YEARS AGO, RESOURCES TO COMBAT THE PROBLEM WERE TYPICALLY LIMITED TO MARRIAGE COUNSELORS, BATTERED WOMEN'S SHELTERS, OR THE DEDICATED LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIAL WHO DIDN'T LOOK THE OTHER WAY OR CHALK IT UP TO THE FACT THAT THE JONES' WERE SIMPLY HAVING A BAD NIGHT. THE PROBLEM WITH THESE BAND-AID FIXES, HOWEVER, WAS THAT A COUNSELOR OFTEN WAS UNABLE TO FIX THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM AND WOMEN LACKED THE RESOURCES AND SUPPORT TO MAKE THE BREAK AFTER THE REPRIEVE OF A SHELTER STAY OR A NIGHT IN LOCK-UP FOR THEIR ABUSER.

OVER THE LAST DECADE I HAVE ALSO SEEN A TRAGIC CONSEQUENCE THAT ALL TOO OFTEN IS IGNORED IN THE TRADITIONAL DIALOGUE ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. I SPEAK OF THE TRAGEDY THAT RESULTS WHEN CHILDREN WITNESS ACTS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE.

THE JUVENILE COURTS IN GEORGIA ARE FILLED WITH DELINQUENTS WHO ARE THEMSELVES VICTIMS, HAVING LEARNED HOW TO BE A BULLY BY WATCHING THEIR PARENTS. AS ADULTS, THESE INNOCENT WITNESSES BECOME ABUSERS THEMSELVES, HAVING LEARNED HOW TO BEAT THEIR WIFE AT DADDY'S KNEE.

AS CHIEF PROSECUTOR IN GEORGIA, I HAVE TAKEN A STRONG STAND AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, BOTH FOR THE VICTIMS WHO WALK AMONG US WITH PHYSICAL SCARS AND THOSE WHO WILL CARRY THEIR EMOTIONAL SCARS AS THEY GROW UP WITH OUR CHILDREN'S CHILDREN. IN MY FIRST TERM AS ATTORNEY GENERAL, I CHAMPIONED LEGISLATION IN GEORGIA THAT MADE OUR

STATE A MODEL IN STOPPING THE CYCLE OF ABUSE. THROUGH THE EFFORTS OF MY OFFICE AND DEDICATED MEMBERS OF OUR GENERAL ASSEMBLY, WE WERE ABLE TO ENACT THE CRIMES AGAINST FAMILY MEMBERS ACT IN GEORGIA. OUR LEGISLATION PROVIDES PROSECUTORS ACROSS GEORGIA WITH NEW TOOLS AND STIFFER PENALTIES TO MAKE SURE THAT THOSE WHO COMMIT ACTS OF FAMILY VIOLENCE ARE PUNISHED FOR THEIR CRIMES. FOR THE FIRST TIME WE MADE IT A CRIME UNDER OUR STATE'S CRUELTY TO CHILDREN LAWS TO COMMIT AN ACT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN FRONT OF A CHILD.

ENDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND THE ATTENDANT CYCLE OF ABUSE IS AND WILL REMAIN MY NUMBER ONE PRIORITY AS ATTORNEY GENERAL IN GEORGIA. HOWEVER, THE PROBLEM OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IS NOT JUST A CRISIS IN GEORGIA; ITS INSIDIOUS TENTACLES REACH FROM COAST TO COAST. IN RESPONSE, THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATTORNEYS GENERAL HAS ESTABLISHED ITS OWN VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN COMMITTEE, WHICH I AM HONORED TO CO-CHAIR. THIS COMMITTEE HAS INITIATED SEVERAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS THE EPIDEMIC OF SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC ABUSE AGAINST WOMEN. WE HAVE HOSTED PROGRAMS ON TEEN DATING VIOLENCE, DATE RAPE DRUG PROSECUTIONS, AND BATTERER INTERVENTION AROUND THE COUNTRY. OUR COMMITTEE HAS PUBLISHED A VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN RESOURCE MANUAL FOR PROSECUTORS TO USE IN INTERVENTION, PROSECUTION AND PREVENTION, AND WE CREATED A COMPILATION OF CASE LAW AND LEGISLATION FROM ALL JURISDICTIONS ON SEXUAL ASSAULT AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TO PROVIDE RESOURCES TO OUR COLLEAGUES IN OTHER STATES ABOUT WHAT WORKS IN OUR OWN JURISDICTION. WE HAVE ALSO HOSTED VIOLENCE IN THE WORKPLACE MEETINGS BETWEEN ATTORNEYS GENERAL AND THE PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTOR TO HELP FIND WAYS TO MAKE THE WORKPLACE SAFE FOR VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. IN ADDITION, WE HAVE CLOSELY COORDINATED WITH THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT'S VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE TO INSURE A COORDINATED STATE AND FEDERAL RESPONSE.

THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATTORNEYS GENERAL IS ALSO IN THE MIDST OF PREPARING A REPORT ON CHILD WITNESSES TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. THIS REPORT, IN ADDITION TO PINNING DOWN THE SCOPE OF THE PROBLEM ON A NATIONWIDE BASIS, WILL ALSO CONTAIN EXPERT ANALYSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR PROSECUTORS AND LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES ACROSS THE NATION ON NEW AND BETTER WAYS TO ASSIST CHILDREN THAT HAVE WITNESSED DOMESTIC ABUSE. I AM PROUD TO SAY THAT THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ATTORNEYS GENERAL IS A LEADER IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, STRONGLY SUPPORTING EFFORTS AT THE STATE AND NATIONAL LEVEL TO END THE CYCLE OF ABUSE.

TO DATE, NO ONE HAS FOUND THE MAGIC BULLET THAT WILL PUT THIS SOCIETAL PROBLEM BEHIND US ONCE AND FOR ALL. MANY STATES, INCLUDING MY OWN, HAVE FOUND NEW AND INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS THAT CAN HELP STEM

THE RISING TIDE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, BUT THIS IS STILL A CRISIS THAT DEMANDS AN ONGOING COMMITMENT FROM EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT AND LAW ENFORCEMENT TO MAKE CERTAIN THAT THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE BEING CREATED TODAY DOES NOT CRIPPLE OUR CHILDREN'S SOCIETY.

LET ME COMMEND CONGRESS FOR THE BOLD STEP IT TOOK IN PASSING THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT, AND THROUGH SUCH ACTION, JOINING THE FIGHT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. THE GRANT MONIES AUTHORIZED UNDER THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT HAVE BEEN A GODSEND TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES AS WELL AS SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS. WE NOW HAVE ADDITIONAL DOLLARS FLOWING DOWN TO THE STATE AND LOCAL LEVEL SUPPLEMENTING OVER-STRETCHED LOCAL MONEYS TO ENSURE THAT NEEDED AND BENEFICIAL PROGRAMS RECEIVE FUNDING TO CONTINUE THEIR MISSION.

EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO THE STATES WAS THE CREATION OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE IN 1995. IT ASSUMED A CRITICAL ROLE IN OUR NATION'S RALLY AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, GIVING US VISION, A SENSE OF DIRECTION, A FEELING OF HOPE. CREATED IN RESPONSE TO PASSAGE OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT, THIS OFFICE IS RECOGNIZED BY GOVERNMENT AND VICTIM SUPPORT GROUPS AROUND THE COUNTRY AS A VALUABLE RESOURCE ON POLICY AND LEGAL ISSUES ARISING IN THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONTEXT.

ONE OF THE PRIMARY FUNCTIONS OF THE OFFICE, TO BE CERTAIN, HAS BEEN THE ADMINISTRATION OF GRANTS AUTHORIZED BY THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN ACT. IN GEORGIA, GRANTS FROM THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE HAVE BEEN USED ACROSS A NUMBER OF FRONTS IN OUR CONTINUING FIGHT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. ONE GRANT WENT TO ESTABLISH MENTORING PROGRAMS IN RURAL GEORGIA TO FACILITATE PAST VICTIMS' TRANSITION FROM A SHELTER ENVIRONMENT TO A WORK ENVIRONMENT. IN THE AREAS THAT WERE TARGETED, VICTIMS HAD NO SUPPORT STRUCTURE IN PLACE TO ASSIST IN MOVING INTO AN INDEPENDENT, PRODUCTIVE ROLE IN SOCIETY. MENTORS HELPED PAST VICTIMS WITH THE ADJUSTMENT FROM CO-DEPENDENT ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIPS TO PRIMARY BREAD-WINNER FOR THEIR FAMILY IN A NON-ABUSIVE ENVIRONMENT.

ANOTHER GRANT WENT TO THE ATLANTA LEGAL AID SOCIETY, WHICH PROVIDES LEGAL ADVICE AND REPRESENTATION TO VICTIMS OF ABUSE, TO HELP THAT ORGANIZATION EXPAND ITS SERVICES TO ATLANTA'S BOOMING POPULATION OF NON-ENGLISH SPEAKING RESIDENTS. VICTIMS IN ATLANTA'S ASIAN AND HISPANIC COMMUNITIES NOW HAVE ACCESS TO LEGAL ASSISTANCE IN SEEKING PROTECTIVE ORDERS THAT JUST DIDN'T EXIST BEFORE THE GRANT FROM THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE.

AND ON A STATE LEVEL, GRANT MONEY FROM THE OFFICE HAS BEEN USED TO SPEED THE CREATION OF A STATE-WIDE REGISTRY FOR PROTECTIVE ORDERS TO FACILITATE ENFORCEMENT ACROSS ALL OF GEORGIA'S 159 COUNTIES. BEFORE

THIS REGISTRY, ENFORCEMENT OF PROTECTIVE ORDERS, ESPECIALLY IN RURAL GEORGIA, WAS A CRAP SHOOT AT BEST. NOW, LAW ENFORCEMENT HAS THE ABILITY TO QUICKLY PULL THE INFORMATION NECESSARY TO PROTECT BOTH VICTIMS AND POTENTIAL VICTIMS FROM AN ABUSIVE INDIVIDUAL.

IN TALKING WITH MY FELLOW ATTORNEYS GENERAL, IT IS CLEAR THAT SIMILAR PROGRAMS PROVIDING ESSENTIAL SERVICES IN THE EFFORTS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DEPEND ON GRANTS ADMINISTERED THROUGH THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE. IN IOWA, GRANTS FROM THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE FUNDED PROJECT PICTURE PERFECT, AN INITIATIVE DESIGNED TO TRAIN LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ADVOCATES ON HOW TO DOCUMENT PHYSICAL ABUSE PHOTOGRAPHICALLY. THIS PROGRAM, TARGETED FOR THE RURAL AREAS OF THE STATE, LOOKS TO PROVIDE INVALUABLE EVIDENCE FOR BOTH PROSECUTORS IN SEEKING APPROPRIATE CHARGES AGAINST ABUSERS AS WELL AS ADVOCATES IN SEEKING PROTECTIVE ORDERS TO PREVENT FUTURE ABUSE.

IN NORTH CAROLINA, FUNDING FOR A DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INITIATIVE FOR WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY WAS OBTAINED THROUGH THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE TO IMPLEMENT CAMPUS-WIDE PROTECTIONS FOR BATTERED STUDENTS. TRAINING FOR UNIVERSITY JUDICIAL HEARING OFFICERS WAS IMPLEMENTED TO EDUCATE THOSE IN A POSITION TO REMOVE PREDATORS FROM CAMPUS. IN ADDITION, A 24-HOUR A DAY CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM WAS SET UP, AND RESOURCES WERE ALLOCATED FOR SHELTERS AND ALTERNATIVE HOUSING FOR VICTIMS OF ABUSE.

A GRANT FROM THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE ALLOWED TWO ATTORNEYS EXPERIENCED IN DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CASEWORK TO BE ADMINISTRATIVELY ASSIGNED TO GROUPS THAT TARGETED ABUSE IN THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITIES IN WASHINGTON STATE. THE EXPERTISE FUNDED BY THIS GRANT ENABLED VICTIMS IN AN UNDER-SERVED SEGMENT OF THE POPULATION TO SEEK THE PROTECTIONS THAT WOULD ALLOW THEM TO ESTABLISH THEIR FINANCIAL INDEPENDENCE AND MAINTAIN THEIR PHYSICAL WELL-BEING.

THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAS NOT BEEN LIMITED TO PARTICIPATION BY CHECKBOOK, HOWEVER. THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE HAS ALSO BECOME A RESOURCE THAT GOVERNMENT AND SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS CAN TURN TO ON POLICY OR LEGAL ISSUES ARISING IN THE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE CONTEXT. THIS LEADERSHIP IS WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD. AN EXAMPLE THAT ARISES WITH INCREASING FREQUENCY CONCERNS THE ENFORCEMENT OF PROTECTIVE ORDERS ACROSS STATE LINES. COMPLEX ISSUES ARISE WHEN LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS TAKE A COMPLAINT FROM A BATTERED WOMAN WHOSE HUSBAND HAS FOLLOWED HER ACROSS STATE LINES. IF THERE ARE NO PROTECTIVE ORDERS CURRENTLY IN PLACE WITHIN THAT JURISDICTION, LAW ENFORCEMENT IS TYPICALLY PLACED INTO A

NO-WIN SITUATION OF COMPETING STORIES ABOUT THE VALIDITY AND EFFECT OF ORDERS THAT MAY OR MAY NOT EXIST. LEGAL ADVOCATES ARE FORCED TO SCRAMBLE TO IDENTIFY JURISDICTIONS WHERE AN ORDER MIGHT EXIST AND THE SCOPE OF ANY EXISTING ORDERS. THE PRESSURE IS TREMENDOUS IN THESE SITUATIONS WHEN TIME IS OF THE ESSENCE IN GIVING AUTHORITY AND DIRECTION TO LOCAL LAW ENFORCEMENT ABOUT WHAT STEPS, IF ANY, THEY CAN TAKE TO PROTECT A POTENTIAL VICTIM.

ON A DAILY BASIS, ISSUES LIKE THESE ARISE THAT MAY FIND EXPERIENCE, AUTHORITY AND RESOURCES LACKING AT THE LOCAL OR STATE LEVEL. IN THE INSTANCE OF EFFECT AND NOTICE OF PROTECTIVE ORDERS IN A MULTI-STATE CONTEXT, THERE REALLY IS NO VIABLE ALTERNATIVE SAVE A STRONG NATIONAL PRESENCE THAT CAN RECONCILE BUREAUCRATIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN STATES AND EVEN SERVE AS A POTENTIAL REPOSITORY FOR THIS LIFE-SAVING INFORMATION. IT IS CRITICAL TO HAVE A RESOURCE AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL WITH THE EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE IN DEALING WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ISSUES THAT ARE UNDISPUTEDLY NATIONAL IN SCOPE AND EFFECT. A STRONG, NATIONAL OFFICE WITH THE RESOURCES AND DAY-TO-DAY EXPERTISE TO COORDINATE AND INSURE A CONSISTENT RESPONSE NATIONWIDE AND PROVIDE POLICY AND TRAINING MATERIALS FOR USE WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT AND ADVOCACY GROUPS ALIKE IS A MUST IN ORDER FOR VICTIMS NOT TO FALL THROUGH THE CRACKS OF UNCERTAINTY AND CONFUSION.

THE VALUE OF A STRONG VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE DOES NOT END WITH THE FEDERAL RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE THAT IT IS ABLE TO PROVIDE STATE AND LOCAL GROUPS. THE OFFICE HAS ALSO BEEN A VALUABLE PARTNER TO STATES IN HELPING US FORGE PUBLIC/PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO FIGHT DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. IN MY OPINION THE FIGHT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE REQUIRES A PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP TO MAKE ANY SIGNIFICANT GAINS. EMPLOYERS ARE A VITAL COMPONENT OF THE EFFORT AS THEIR ATTITUDES, POLICIES AND RESOURCES WILL HELP DETERMINE THE LIKELIHOOD OF IDENTIFYING ABUSE EARLY, THE AVAILABILITY OF SUPPORT AND COUNSELING, AND THE ABILITY OF FORMER VICTIMS TO SUPPORT THEIR FAMILIES.

IN MY STATE, AS WELL AS EVERY STATE REPRESENTED ON THIS COMMITTEE HERE TODAY, A SUBSTANTIAL NUMBER OF EMPLOYERS ARE MULTI-STATE CORPORATIONS THAT SET POLICY FOR OFFICES IN LITERALLY DOZENS OF STATES. WHEN STATE OFFICIALS, WHETHER THEY BE ATTORNEYS GENERAL, GOVERNORS OR LEGISLATIVE LEADERS APPROACH CORPORATE DECISION-MAKERS ABOUT ADOPTING MODEL POLICIES OR ALTERING EXISTING POLICIES OR PRACTICES, WE ARE OFTEN GREETED WITH, "WELL, WHAT DOES WASHINGTON HAVE TO SAY ON THIS ISSUE?" THEIR RESPONSE WILL OFTEN BE BASED ON THE IMPORTANCE THAT THEY THINK THE DECISION-MAKERS IN OUR NATION'S CAPITOL ARE PLACING ON THE INITIATIVE. IN SHORT, THE AUTHORITY AND PRESTIGE YOU AFFORD A PROGRAM SENDS A VERY POWERFUL MESSAGE TO

CORPORATE AMERICA AND IN MANY INSTANCES WILL DETERMINE THEIR PARTICIPATION.

WITHOUT THE PRESTIGE AND ACCESS AFFORDED AN INDEPENDENT VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE, I AM TRULY CONCERNED THAT MANY OF THESE PUBLIC/PRIVATE INITIATIVES WILL NOT HAPPEN. IF PRIVATE INDUSTRY DOES NOT GET ON BOARD AND BECOME AN ACTIVE PARTICIPANT IN THE EFFORTS AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, INDIVIDUALS WILL SUFFER PHYSICAL AND FINANCIAL HARM AS A RESULT.

THAT IS WHY IT IS SO CRITICAL THAT THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE HAVE THE PRESTIGE, STATURE AND ACCESS ENVISIONED BY THE SENATE LEGISLATION. BOTH CHAMBERS OF CONGRESS HAVE RECOGNIZED THAT THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE FUNCTIONS IN THE LEAD ROLE AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL IN THE FIGHT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BY VOTING TO GRANT STATUTORY AUTHORIZATION.

THE NEED GOES BEYOND MERE AUTHORIZATION AND CONTINUED EXISTENCE, HOWEVER. TO ASSUME A MEANINGFUL ROLE IN HELPING STATES AND REGIONS WITH DEVELOPING WORKING AGREEMENTS AND WORTHWHILE PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS, THE REALITIES OF THE SITUATION DEMAND THAT THE DIRECTOR OF THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE BE VIEWED AS SOMETHING MORE THAN SOMEONE WITH A LARGE CHECKBOOK WHO REPORTS TO SOMEONE ELSE OVERSEEING DISPARATE GRANT PROGRAMS WHO REPORTS TO AN ASSOCIATE ATTORNEY GENERAL WHO MAY, ULTIMATELY, PASS ALONG INFORMATION TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL.

WE LIVE IN A DAY AND AGE WHERE ONE OUT OF EVERY THREE WOMEN HAS SUFFERED ABUSE AT SOME TIME IN HER LIFE. STATISTICS SHOW THAT EVERY YEAR UPWARDS OF THREE MILLION CHILDREN WITNESS ACTS OF VIOLENCE BY ONE PARENT OR PARTNER AGAINST ANOTHER. THESE TIMES DEMAND LEADERSHIP AND INITIATIVE IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AT EVERY LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT, FROM THE MUNICIPAL POLICE DEPARTMENT ALL THE WAY TO THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF THE UNITED STATES. WITHOUT A STRONG POLICY-SETTING ARM AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL THAT CAN BE RELIED UPON FOR RESOURCES AND GUIDANCE, EFFORTS TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE FOR OUR CHILDREN, WITH THE SAME FERVOR THAT OUR PARENTS STAMPED OUT POLIO FOR US, WILL SUFFER MIGHTILY. AS WE CONFRONT THE DILEMMA OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE 21ST CENTURY, ONE THING IS ABSOLUTELY CLEAR, THE SITUATION CALLS FOR MORE LEADERSHIP AND INITIATIVE, NOT LESS.

I CAN PROMISE YOU THAT ATTORNEYS GENERAL AND LAW ENFORCEMENT OFFICIALS FROM AROUND THE COUNTRY ARE DOING EVERYTHING IN OUR POWER TO END THE CYCLE OF ABUSE. I WOULD ASK CONGRESS TO EMPOWER THAT SAME COMMITMENT AND DEDICATION AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL BY EMPOWERING A STRONG CENTRAL VOICE IN THE VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN OFFICE, A VOICE THAT NOT ONLY SPENDS GRANT DOLLARS, BUT ALSO HELPS

THE STATES SET VITAL POLICY IN CRITICAL TIMES. HISTORY WILL REMEMBER US, NOT BY THE PROMISES WE MAKE, BUT BY THE ACTIONS WE TAKE! NO STRONGER ACTION COULD BE TAKEN.

THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN AND DISTINGUISHED SENATORS, FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN YOU TODAY.