

Statement of
The Honorable Russ Feingold

United States Senator
Wisconsin
May 5, 2010

Statement of U.S. Senator Russell D. Feingold at the
Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing entitled
"The Increased Importance of the Violence Against Women Act in a Time of Economic Crisis"
Wednesday, May 5, 2010

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this important hearing. I am a longtime supporter of the Violence Against Women Act and have worked for years to ensure that its programs are fully funded. VAWA initiatives play a critically important role in combating domestic and sexual violence but there is still much work to be done. Despite the enactment of this important law in 1994 and its reauthorization in 2000 and 2005, violence against women remains pervasive in our country.

I am pleased that President Obama has increased funding for VAWA and other victims service programs in his budget for fiscal year 2011. While I fully recognize that tough decisions need to be made about spending federal dollars in the current economic climate, federal investment in protecting women and children from domestic violence is especially necessary at times like this. It is no secret that domestic violence becomes more pervasive in times of economic distress.

Wisconsin has seen particularly disturbing statistics in recent years. For example, requests for domestic violence-related services in Wisconsin have increased an average of 50% in many communities, and Dane County saw an increase of 200% in requests for shelter in 2010. In 2009 Wisconsin saw the highest rate of domestic violence homicide in the past 10 years--an increase of 30% over 2008 homicide levels. During a single day in Wisconsin in 2009, 1,900 victims were served by domestic violence services. During that same timeframe, 273 people had to be turned away due to lack of funding and staff.

These statistics of victimization are staggering, and a commitment from Congress to continue to support victim assistance programs is essential. I look forward to the testimony of today's witnesses, which I am confident will prompt new ideas for how Congress can continue to help victims of domestic violence.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.