



Help and Healing for
Victims of Violence

Witness Justice e-Newsletter

March 2008

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Poe/Costa Letter Asking Members of Congress to Raise 2009 VOCA Cap

How You Can Help

Rep. Ted Poe and Rep. Jim Costa, co-chairs of the Congressional Crime Victim's Rights Caucus, are asking other Members of Congress to join with them in asking appropriators to restore VOCA victim assistance funding by raising the 2009 VOCA cap to at least \$770 million. For more informatoin about VOCA funding and its impact visit <http://www.navaa.org/08/index.html>. For individuals wanting to contact their Member of Congress to express the importance of signing on the Poe/Costa letter, you can access your Member's contact information via this link: [<http://ui.constantcontact.com/visualeditor/visua...p?agent.uid=1102009926309&format=html&print=true> \(1 of 6\) \[4/25/2008 10:35:48 AM\]](http://</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Join Our Mailing List!

www.house.gov/house/MemberWWW_by_State.shtml. The deadline for them to sign on is March 14.

"Check" This Out!

Now Witness Justice can bank on your support every time you bank at SunTrust. The new SunPoints® for CharitySM, an ongoing rewards program lets you keep supporting your favorite cause by turning everyday banking into everyday giving.

SunTrust will donate \$100 to the charity of your choice, or you can choose to receive a \$50 SunTrust Visa® Gift Card to keep for your own cause when you:

- Open a new Personal or Business checking account from August 6 through March 29, 2008, and

- Accept a new SunTrust Visa Check Card and make any purchase using your new card by May 15, 2008, and

VOCA/VAWA Funding for FY '09 May be in Jeopardy

Proposed Budget Cut Will Leave Thousands of Victims without Crucial Services

President Bush's Budget Request for Fiscal Year 2009 released on Feb. 4, 2008 proposes cutting \$120 million from life-saving domestic violence services created by the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). In addition to cutting VAWA funding by one-third, the proposed budget eliminates the \$2 billion balance in the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Fund, a non-taxpayer funded resource serving over 3 million crime victims each year.

The VOCA Fund has been used to provide counseling services to victims of terrorism and mass violence, including \$68.1 million to support the victims of the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"If enacted, it would be devastating for victims of all types of violence by lessening the support and availability of services they can access," said Helga West, President of Witness Justice.

According to the National Census of Domestic Violence Services (NCDVS), in just one day, domestic violence programs lacked the resources to meet 7,707 requests for emergency shelter, legal assistance, or other advocacy services.

When the resources do not exist for victims to receive domestic violence services, victims are left with no choice but to return to their abusers.

You can make your voice heard on this issue. Go to the official congressional web sites, www.senate.gov and www.house.gov to find your senator's or congressman's names and office addresses on Capitol Hill. You can also use these web sites to learn more about them and where they stand on the issues. Or call the Capitol Hill switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected to your congressman.

To learn more about the President's Budget Request and how it impacts domestic violence victims, please visit [click here](#).

Complete and submit a redemption form by May 15, 2008

Learn more at www.suntrust.com/mycause.

It's worth "checking" out!

Lights! Camera! Advocacy!

John Walsh, host of television's **America's Most Wanted**, and Rep. Patrick Kennedy (D-RI), co-chair of the Congressional Caucus on Addition, Treatment and Recovery, appear in a new 4-minute informational video on Witness Justice. [Click here](#) to view the video.

Impact of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita on Substance Use and Mental Health

Most Adults Affected by the Storms Showed Surprising Mental Health Resilience

The major finding of the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) indicates that people who experienced prolonged displacement from their homes after hurricanes Katrina and Rita had higher rates of mental health and substance abuse problems but most adults affected by the storms showed surprising mental health resilience.

Adults forced from their homes for two weeks or more by Hurricanes Katrina or Rita were much more likely to report mental health and substance abuse problems than those who were not similarly dislocated, according to a report based on surveys conducted before and after these storms hit.

The report by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), however, also indicated that most adults affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita did not evidence increased levels of mental health or substance abuse problems.

"This report shows that most people are resilient - that they can overcome tremendous adversity," said SAMHSA Administrator Terry Cline, Ph.D. "But it also shows that when people are displaced from their homes it can be devastating, and that mental health resources can play a critical role in enabling them to fully recover from such a trauma."

The report was based on data drawn from National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) surveys done before and after the storms hit. The report focused on the data representing the approximately 14 million adults living in the Gulf State Disaster Area (regions of Alabama, Florida, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas declared eligible for disaster relief).

The full report provides additional findings and background information on this and other studies dealing with populations that have suffered from large-scale disasters. It also provides detailed breakdowns by demographic groups and other factors, and is available on the [Web](#). Copies may be obtained free of charge by calling SAMHSA's Health Information Network at 1-877-SAMHSA-7 (1-877-726-4727). Request inventory number NSDUH 08-0131.

GAINS Conference Approaching

Center for Mental Health Services on Creating More Effective Services

The CMHS National GAINS Center Conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill March 18-20, 2008. The Conference will bring together practitioners and researchers in criminal justice, mental health, and substance abuse services to develop and expand effective programs and policies.

Helga West, President and CEO of Witness Justice, will be presenting a session at the conference entitled: "Understanding Trauma from the Crime Victim Service Provider Perspective". For more information on West's presentation and other sessions at the conference, please [click here](#).

National Crime Victims' Rights Week

April 13-19, 2008

[Click here](#) for more details.

Justice for VICTIMS Justice for ALL

Prelude Events - Free and Open to the Public

National Observance and Candlelight Ceremony
 THURSDAY — APRIL 10, 2008
 Time: 6:30–7:30 pm
 US Chamber of Commerce
 1615 H Street, NW
 Washington, DC
 No RSVP Required

FEATURED SPEAKER:
Dominick Dunne, Accomplished author, investigative journalist, host of *TV's Power, Privilege, and Justice*, and co-victim and homicide survivor of his beloved daughter, actress Dominique Dunne.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week Awards Ceremony
 FRIDAY — APRIL 11, 2008
 Time: 2:30–4:30 pm
 Andrew W. Mellon Auditorium
 1301 Constitution Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC
 Reception immediately following ceremony.
 Online RSVP required at: www.ncrvw.org

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT THESE EVENTS, VISIT WWW.OVC.GOV

Sponsored by: U.S. DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE, OFFICE OF JUSTICE PROGRAMS, OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME

Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Accessibility: Designated seating area near video presentation with captioning and ASL interpreters will be provided.

National Crime Victims' Rights Week is held every April to honor crime victims and those who advocate on their behalf.

Pepsi's 5th Annual Race to Stop the Silence

Non-profit Event to Raise Awareness, Prevention, and Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse

Founded in 2002 by Pamela Pine, PhD., MHP, an international health and development specialist; Stop the Silence, Inc. is an organization that was created to raise awareness and funds to support and conduct programming to address the prevention and treatment of Child Sexual Abuse (CSA), which is a growing epidemic throughout the United States and the World. CSA results in both physical and psychological trauma, as well as social destruction for survivors, impacting the community and society at large. Most cases of CSA go unreported as a result of the shame, guilt, embarrassment, and fear, felt by victims.

The 10K race and 5K pledge walk will be held on Sunday, April 13, 2008 at 8:30 am in Washington, D.C. The Kids' Fun Run, a non-competitive 1K, will take place immediately following the race and walk. For more information and registration details, please [click here](#) and join the Race to Stop the Silence!

Witness Justice is a national, grassroots, nonprofit organization created by survivors for survivors. Our mission is to empower and assist victims of violence and their loved ones with both healing from trauma and in navigating the criminal justice process. Witness Justice offers support regardless of where a victim lives, when or where the crime occurred, or whether the crime was ever reported. For more information, visit www.WitnessJustice.org.



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