

Wednesday, May 16, 2012

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico’s Third District spoke on the House floor today in opposition to a partisan House Republican bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act. Below are his remarks as prepared.

“Madam Speaker, it is with great disappointment that I rise today in opposition to this bill, not because the issue of violence against women is not real, but because this House bill does not do enough to address domestic violence and to protect women.

“Sadly, instead of taking action on the bipartisan bill that has passed the Senate and that meets the need to protect America’s women, the Republican majority has chosen confrontation over compromise with a bill that is seriously limited, including in the protections it offers to Native American women.

“The Senate version is a comprehensive bill that addresses the seriousness of violent crimes targeted toward women, including in Indian Country. I represent 17 of the 22 Native American tribes in New Mexico and I will tell you that tribal families are all too often ravaged by domestic violence. Unfortunately, violent crimes committed on tribal lands go unprosecuted more often than they should because of loopholes in existing law and neither this bill nor the manager’s amendment adequately protect Tribal communities.

“I was my great hope that House Republicans would rise to do the right thing. Don’t hide behind excuses. Do the right thing. Let’s close the loopholes that allow abusers to get away with violence, especially against Native American women. It is not right that abusers game these loopholes to abuse their victims. Reject this bill and take up the bipartisan Senate bill.”

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