

Tuesday, February 12, 2013

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico’s Third District released the following statement today after the Senate passed legislation reauthorizing the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Luján is a cosponsor of companion legislation in the House of Representatives.

“Almost two decades ago, Congress passed the Violence Against Women Act to reduce domestic abuse and provide victims of violence with critical services and vital assistance. Since that time, domestic violence has dropped more than 50 percent while reporting of domestic violence has increased by as much as 51 percent. Communities and law enforcement agencies have coordinated their response to violence against women and provided effective, long-term support for victims.

“Sadly, for the first time since it was originally passed, the last Congress failed to reauthorize VAWA. Despite Senate passage of a bipartisan bill, House Republicans refused to bring the legislation up for a vote.

“In the opening months of the 113th Congress, the Senate has taken action to reauthorize this important legislation that has helped protect millions of women across the country. The bipartisan bill is a comprehensive effort to address the seriousness of violent crimes, especially in Indian Country.

“House Republican leaders should abandon their efforts to pass a weakened version that excludes protections, including those for Native American women, and bring the bipartisan Senate bill to the House floor for a vote. With violent crimes on tribal lands going unprosecuted more often than they should because of loopholes in existing laws, it is important that we pass this bill that will provide Native Americans with the protections they deserve. Failure to pass this bill will deprive women, children, and families of vital protections against abuse.”

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