

# *Why Victims Want the Partner Violence Reduction Act*

The proposed Partner Violence Reduction Act was released on July 11. The Partner Violence Reduction Act (PVRA) will strengthen and amend the Violence Against Women Act, which is up for reauthorization this year.

The PVRA is designed to help *all* victims:

## *1. Victims of Physical Violence*

Abuse shelters in Washington DC currently have a 3-month wait-period. But when a victim needs to flee a dangerous situation, sitting around for months simply is not an option.

The cause of the problem can be traced back to expanding definitions and lack of requirements for proof of abuse. The DoJ Office of Violence Against Women now defines domestic violence in amazingly broad and amorphous terms:

“a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship that is used by one partner to *gain or maintain power and control* over another intimate partner.”

The PVRA limits the definition of domestic violence to “felony or misdemeanor crimes of violence,” so victims of physical violence don’t have to take a number and wait their turn.

## *2. Victims of False Allegations*

According to a recent national telephone survey, 11% of persons have been falsely accused of domestic violence, child abuse, or sexual assault.<sup>1</sup>

Every false accusation robs true victims of desperately needed services and protections. And such claims can have devastating personal effects on the falsely accused.

The PVRA distinguishes between an allegation and an adjudicated offense, and assures that “equal treatment under the law” is more than a hollow promise for the accused.

## *3. Victims of Harmful and Discriminatory Policies*

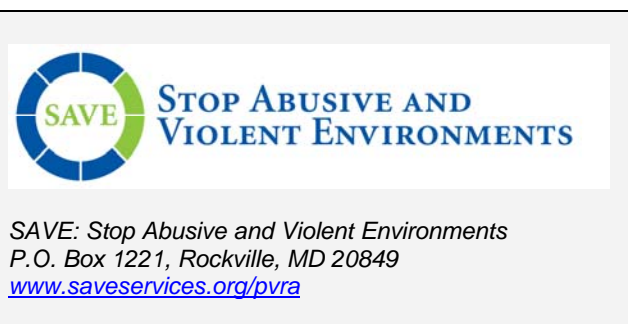
According to a Harvard University study, mandatory arrest laws increase partner homicides by nearly 60% -- that translates into over 600 persons killed each year. But every year, VAWA spends \$26 million to states to enforce such harmful policies.

Likewise, many VAWA-funded programs engage in openly discriminatory practices. A Department of Justice Memorandum Opinion prohibits such illegal policies,<sup>2</sup> but discrimination continues to be widespread to this day.

## *Other Benefits*

The Partner Violence Reduction Act also reinvigorates constitutional protections, fosters partner reconciliation when feasible, requires accreditation of educational programs to assure the accuracy of information, and improves program accountability.

The upcoming renewal of the Violence Against Women Act offers a historic opportunity to ensure our promises to victims are kept.



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.saveservices.org/false-allegations-awareness-month/survey-results/>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.justice.gov/olc/2010/vawa-opinion-04272010.pdf>