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VAWA 2005: Protection For Immigrant Women

Legal Momentum, the nation's oldest women's legal rights organization, calls on President Bush to sign the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) into law.

Legal Momentum's Immigrant Women Program co-chairs the National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women and has been responsible for leading each successful effort in 1994, 2000 and now again in 2005 to craft and secure passage of ground breaking protections for immigrant victims that are included in the Violence Against Women Act.

VAWA 2005 contains significantly enhanced protections for immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and trafficking by:

- Reassuring and protecting trafficking victims by reuniting them with family members from abroad (who may have been under threat by the traffickers) and increasing access to permanent residency for those who cooperate in traffickers' prosecution.
- Granting batterer immigrants locked in abusive marriages to husbands on legal work visas (e.g. H 1-b visas) access to the economic stability of legal work authorization.
- Protecting Victims of Child Abuse and Elder Abuse, including incest victims, from being cut off from immigration relief when they turn 21.
- Preventing the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) from arresting Immigrant victims at shelters or rape crisis centers based on information provided by abusers.
- Assuring that all immigrant victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and many violent crimes can be represented by Legal Services Corporation (LSC) funded lawyers.

"This legislation insures that any victim of domestic violence, trafficking, and sexual assault can walk into any legal services agency and for the first time ever get help," says Leslye Orloff, Immigrant Women Program (IWP) Director. "For immigrant women, it gives them a way out," she adds. The IWP strives to protect and expand the rights of immigrant women and their children. The goal is to enhance the legal rights and basic economic security of this traditionally underserved group.

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