



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION
FOR GUN RIGHTS

March 16, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy:

As you consider Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee's H.R. 1620, the *Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2021*, this week, we ask you reevaluate this misguided legislation. The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) was originally passed in 1994 to meet the needs of victims. Unfortunately, this legislation has grown increasingly political and every time it is re-authorized, a highly partisan battle erupts.

When H.R. 1620 was introduced last week, we were hopeful the needs of survivors would be central and assistance, protection, and the right of self-defense would be delivered to those facing these crises. However, we are deeply troubled by many aspects of H.R. 1620, as it seems the bill is more focused upon expanding a progressive political agenda than delivering services to survivors.

The 2013 reauthorization of VAWA enshrined harmful gender identity ideology into the program. A "non-discrimination" provision was added into the "Universal definitions and grant conditions" section that elevated gender identity and sexual orientation to protected class status. The Obama administration's [Department of Justice made it clear in its Frequently Asked Questions](#) (FAQs) that those who identify as transgender are to be given consideration over biological women.

H.R. 1620 continues this language and in Title I (Enhancing Legal Tools to Combat Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking) expounds upon it. The Attorney General is also given tools to ensure that it is implemented. Unfortunately, there is every reason to believe that the Biden administration will continue the de-prioritization of women.

Furthermore, on this point, Title II of H.R. 1620 (Improving Services for Victims) strikes the word "women" and inserts "people." We see women erased again in Title IV (Violence Reduction Practices) when the language strikes "violence against women" and inserts "violence against adults, youth." Is it time to rename the Violence Against **Women** Act?

We were disappointed to learn that Title V of H.R. 1620 (Strengthening the Health Care Systems Response) defines our nation's healthcare system as racist. In Section 501, the legislative text describes how to improve the health care system's response and it reads, "include training on equity and anti-racism approaches to health services delivery; disparities in access to health care services and prevention

resources; **and current and historic systemic racism in health care services.” VAWA should focus on women survivors of violence regardless of racial identity.**

Title VI (Safe Homes for Victims) and Title VII (Economic Security for Victims) outline huge expansions of federal housing programs and the unemployment compensation system seeking to address domestic violence survivor needs but ignoring privacy concerns and cost.

Titles VIII and XII threaten our Second Amendment rights and would actually encourage violence against women by facilitating their disarmament using *ex parte* court proceedings, broadly expanding the category of persons prohibited from possessing firearms, and by providing federal funding and assistance for increased gun confiscation.

Moreover, in another show of its de-prioritization of women, the bill prioritizes the placement desires of male inmates identifying as women over the privacy and safety of female inmates. [Women in custody are being raped because of such wrong-headed policy.](#)

Title XI (Improving Conditions for Women in Federal Custody) envisions a pilot program funded by taxpayer dollars that would **“permit women incarcerated in Federal prisons and the children born to such women during incarceration to reside together while the inmate serves a term of imprisonment...”**

As written, H.R. 1620 brushes aside the fact that *women* are overwhelmingly the victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking. The bill threatens our Second Amendment rights, it funds programs that would have babies being raised in prison, it fails to provide religious organizations helping victims, equal access to VAWA grants without fear of government discrimination, and it jeopardizes the safety and privacy of women and girls in shelter spaces.

Programs under VAWA should protect survivors, never putting female safety and dignity at risk. We urge you to oppose H.R. 1620 as written and work to reauthorize VAWA in a truly bipartisan and effective way.

Sincerely,

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