



In 1984, Congress passed the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA), which provides federal support for state and local programs assisting victims of crime. VOCA allocates non-taxpayer funds, generated by fines against convicted federal criminals, from the Crime Victims Fund (CVF) to qualifying direct service organizations. Under the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, Congress authorized specially designated funds from the CVF to support victim service organizations in providing trauma-informed services to survivors of human trafficking. Through the issuance of victim assistance grants, the CVF provides necessary services to over 6 million victims annually. Despite the critical nature of these services, Congress has failed to adequately support the program in recent years. In 2020, VOCA disbursement decreased by 25 percent, causing significant cuts to programs that are already struggling to meet the needs of survivors.

The “VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021” (VOCA Fix Act) will revitalize the CVF by allocating additional revenue sources to the Fund and increasing the amount of money made available each year for victim service programs. This is a bipartisan, bicameral piece of legislation with broad support from national and state-based organizations.

This legislation is crucial for maintaining the CVF while continuing to provide much needed services to survivors of human trafficking and similar crimes. It is especially necessary due to the COVID-19 pandemic, which has delayed many prosecutions and restricted other funding sources provided on the state and local level. By expanding the funding sources contributing to the CVF and increasing the amount awarded through VOCA grants, victim service programs can continue to provide necessary care to survivors, including medical care and counseling. This directly results in reduced trauma and enhanced stability for survivors, increasing the likelihood that they will successfully recover from their abuse.

Importance of enacting the VOCA Fix Act

- VOCA is a non-taxpayer source of funding that depends on successful prosecutions.
- Deferred prosecutions and non-prosecution agreements have led to a decrease in deposits.
- Deposits into the CVF are historically low, resulting in cuts to victim service grants.
- 31 states and DC have enacted laws that would prohibit child sex trafficking victims from being prosecuted for prostitution; to avoid re-victimization, removing criminal penalties must be coupled with access to specialized services. (Shared Hope’s [Seeking Justice Report](#); WA HB 1775)
- The VOCA Fix Act would increase the CVF – and victim service grants – by depositing money that would go into the fund if cases were prosecuted rather than settled.
- Increased deposits and sustainable grants will ensure survivors can access services necessary for empowerment and healing.



The VOCA Fix Act (S.611) accomplishes these goals by:

- Amending the Victims of Crime Act of 1984 to allow funds for the CVF to be collected from deferred prosecution and non-prosecution agreements.
- Increasing the annual grant from the CVF from 60 percent to 75 percent and removing the requirement that crime victim compensation programs deduct recovery costs and collections from restitution or subrogation for payment for the purposes of calculating amounts awarded.
- Allowing crime victim compensation programs to include organizations that advocate for an exception to victim cooperation with law enforcement when such cooperation is impacted by the “victim’s age, physical condition, psychological state, cultural or linguistic barriers, or any other health or safety concern that jeopardizes the victim’s wellbeing.”
- Allowing states to request a no-cost extension from the Attorney General to ensure states can continue to effectively distribute victim service grants without penalty.
- Authorizing chief executives to waive the 20 percent matching requirement at their discretion as a condition for crime victim assistance program to receive funds.
- Automatically removing the matching requirement for all eligible crime victim assistance programs for up to one year after the end date of the national emergency declared in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Current Cosponsors:

Senators Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, along with Senators Lindsey Graham (R-SC), Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), Chuck Grassley (R-IA), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), John Cornyn (R-TX), Amy Klobuchar (D-MN), and Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), Patrick Leahy (D-VT), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Joni Ernst (R-IA), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Thom Tillis (R-NC), Ron Wyden (D-OR), Bob Menendez (D-NJ), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA), Tina Smith (D-MN), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Jack Reed (D-RI), Jon Tester (D-MT), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Bob Casey (D-PA), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), and Rob Portman (R-OH).



House companion legislation sponsored by U.S. Representatives Jerrold Nadler (D-NY-10), Brian Fitzpatrick (R-PA-01), Sheila Jackson Lee (D-TX-18), Ann Wagner (R-MO-02), Mary Scanlon (D-PA-05), Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA-05), Debbie Dingell (D-MI-12), and John Moolenaar (R-MI-04).

Learn More:

- Visit <https://sharedhope.org/what-we-do/bring-justice/> to access Shared Hope’s research and advocacy resources.
- For technical assistance, visit: <https://sharedhope.org/legislative-technical-assistance/>

Additional Sources:

- Durbin, Graham, Bipartisan Senators Lead Legislation to Strengthen the Victims of Crime Act <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/press/dem/releases/durbin-graham-bipartisan-senators-lead-legislation-to-strengthen-the-victims-of-crime-act>
- Types of Funding, OFFICE FOR VICTIMS OF CRIME, <https://ovc.ojp.gov/funding/types-of-funding>
- Victims of Crime Act, NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE, [https://nnedv.org/content/victims-of-crime-act/#:~:text=The%20VOCA%20Fix%20Act%20would,Crime%20Victims%20Fund%20\(CVF\).&text=In%20federal%20Fiscal%20Years%202015,victims%20of%20crime%20each%20year.](https://nnedv.org/content/victims-of-crime-act/#:~:text=The%20VOCA%20Fix%20Act%20would,Crime%20Victims%20Fund%20(CVF).&text=In%20federal%20Fiscal%20Years%202015,victims%20of%20crime%20each%20year.)
- Open Letter in Support of the VOCA Fix Act, <https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/sign-on-letter-118th-congress-03042021.pdf?1614870453639>
- Text of the Preliminary House version of the “VOCA Fix to Sustain the Crime Victims Fund Act of 2021” https://judiciary.house.gov/uploadedfiles/voca_text.pdf